# SPA FON

*No.* 5 1969

# SPA FON NUMBER 5

ESPECIALLY FOND GRATITUDE GOES OUT TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE,
WITHOUT WHOSE HELP THIS MANNER OF MAGAZINE COULD NOT HAVE COME ABOUT

Frank Frazetta

Bill Gaines

Steve Hickman

Mike Kaluta

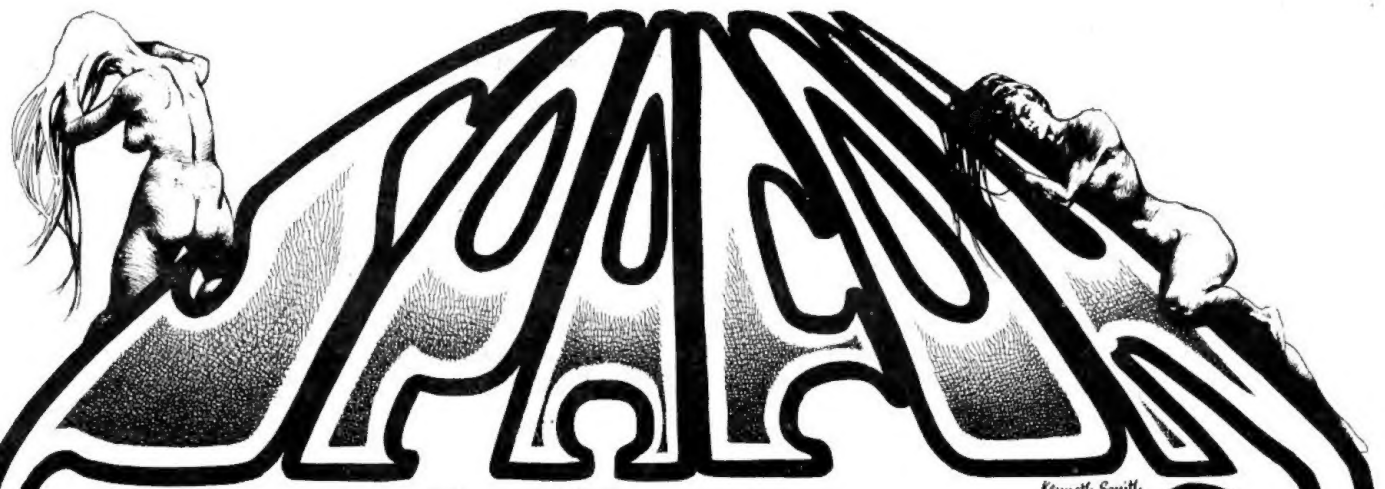
Tom Long

Kenneth Smith

Jim Steranko

Berni Wrightson

IN GRATITUDE



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Production Assistants.....Alan Wong, Pete Krupkowski, Randy Broecker

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ADDITIONAL CREDITS - Tom Long, for sending us the Cody Art; Jerry Weist, for moral and actual support; Kenneth Smith, for outstanding generosity; and Bill Gaines and Jim Steranko, for letting us poach their valuable time
NEXT ISSUE - Described in Editorial; Released Summer '70; Order now $1½
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GRAPHICS SHOWCASE #2 (See Page 42 for a Description)!!!

SPA FON No.5 Annual Issue September 1969

Dedicated to

Walt Disney, Boris Karloff, Fatty Arbuckle,
Greenie Stick-em Caps, Rootie Kazootie, Flub-a-dub, Dogs & cats,
Norman Mailer, Jessica Reichert, Nancy Webb, Roger Zelazny, Dick Cavett,
Gahan Wilson, Baby Face Nelson, Dirty Old Men, Dirty Young Woman, Nedick's OJ,
Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young, The Bonzo Dog Band, The Beer-Barrel Polka,
Vitamins and Minerals, Shoo Fly Pie, The Eggplant that Ate Chicago,
Ernie Banks, Dave Nicholson (Baseball's Greatest Air-Conditioner),
The Headless Horseman, Colerige, Jabberwocky,
Terry-cloth Loin Cloths, Friend Rook,
25¢ Handouts & Free Coffee, The Great Outdoors, AND
"Brushing your teeth and washing your hands !"

CODY

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In the EXOTIC CITADEL
Printed by THE MADISON PRESS, CHICAGO

Thee editors all: Rudy Hauser, John J. Dziewiatkowski, Pete Krupkowski, Tom Poppalardo, Ft Worth

**Fold** back again the pure pages of another SPA FON magazine. The issue that took more than a year in the making once again fills your hands and mind, and with all that time on the line, it better be good, right? Right! Starting with our fantasteFrazetta cover we deliver our stored power! Then our observant readers will notice the refurbished contents page -- it's design is completely new! Kenneth Smith, Master of Philosophy, bows into our eager pages with this well-due vitalization of the contents layout, complete with supple SPA FON babes hugging our namesake. And that be just starters; there is more from his precise pen on the following pages, and we hope the enthusiastic SPA FON - Ken Smith collaboration will continue strong from this issue on.

Now, speaking of contents, you'll notice no Wrightson strip this time, as predicted lastish. The facts of the matter are that Berni did do a strip for us, had it finished a full year ago. And thereby hangs its unavailability; it was finished too soon! (Strange as that hits you.) Berni feels now that it does not represent his present level of drawing, and he's intent on shelving it rather than see it spread to gourmet readers such as yourselves, the SPA FON people of America. (And Canada.) He has the desire, if not the time, to do a new story-strip for SPA FON, however. So let's all encourage him on -- SPA FON #6 would be glad bearer of such a newly rendered handiwork by BW. In the meantime, Berni has poured his horn a'plenty into our pages via many gorgeous full page inkings. Thankee' Berni!

And what about "The Hole in Space" and where it's headed to, you ask. Well, Mike Kaluta has gone through many changes in the past year, like three adress changes, finally moving to New York City and rooming with the venerable BW! He is currently working on professional projects, as a result being so pressed that he couldn't keep up on the strip for this issue. But we hope optimistically to have him back nextish. Sniff* Mike knows that we need his tender story touch render us content and stable of mind, and he's bound to respond with new bursts of creativity aimed at SPA FONer's by next Summer. To inspire him, let's have a moment of silence to mourn our loss this issue. ( .) Hear that Mike -- a thousand silent SPA FON readers!

To fill the gap of visual story, Mike's buddy and artist supreme, Steve Hickman, does us proud by the maiden installment of his "Demon Star" story strip. The second startling part next time.

And while we're talkin' 'bout our next issues's strips, would you believe we're scheduled to print an unpublished EC story in #6? By ghouly, it's true! Uncle Bill Gaines (interviewed this issue) has given us the nod to print an Al Williamson - George Evans science-fiction job that hereto has never enjoyed the light of day.. We'll do it next number, Lord willin! So don't miss it. Erudite EC fanatics will realize that this story was slated for the 3-D EC which never saw print. WITZEND readers recall the WOOD story "Spawn of Venus" supposed to be in the same EC. Now SPA FONer's will savor the Evans - Williamson tale. So include Bill Gaines in your prayers tonight for his unfailing generosity! An EC staff member once poetically praised our Uncle Bill by saying, "Fun around the clock -- you bet, we had our fill." And now I speak for all SPA FONer's by saying, "Long live Uncle Bill's Barrel of Gaines to us all!" Whew!

Now that I've unloaded big guns about next issue, and since this number speaks for itself, let me address myself to the moon and mail early! No -- there I go trying to avoid the issue with slapstick. Let me seriously address myself to the new price of SPA FON. (Don't forget the almost triple-size and colorful cover while we talk money.) Yep, we now cost $1.50 Merry thieves are we at SPAFON. Neccessary evil, since we carry no paying ads. And while we're at it -- we've been coming up with an issue a year amidst your pleas of, "Where's SPA FON, crooked Editors?" Right? So let's make it official. It seems a year is necessary to do SPA FON right nowadays, and we're pledged to improve with each issue. So, Hear ye, Hear ye! Once a Summer, every Summer we'll greet your eyes. We won't say die as long as body and spirit are together, and we're all young devils. What's more, with the sorry demise of SQUA TRONT, our brotherzine, after the Christmas #4 issue, Jerry Weist and Roger Hill, the Wichita linesmen, will bust into our pages as associate editors. Yep, one issue a year is all we can muster, but it'll be well worth the wait. Our solemn pledge.

You can reserve next Summer's SPA FON #6 by sending off $1.50 post haste. Also in it will be an enlightenting interview or two, plus the Al Williamson Master Checklist. It will be the most extravagant ever done, and was TOO BIG to get into this issue what with the long Frazetta one, which gives you an idea of its size, A possible Kenneth Smith portfolio, our first Jeff Jones fantasy inking, a much awaited Vaughn Bode appearance, and untold other art will add additional sparkle to the pages. Poems, letters, and a story will dullen them, hah! The cover for #6, full color again; a dandy surprise for now! The Exotic Citadel here now heralds a subscription editor, Tom Pappalardo by name, to take the loot. His is the task of keeping all mailed monies and addresses straight, and he's always been a dependable creature. MANY THANX to each and every SPA FONer for monetary support gone by!

End of Editorial. Now enter you the Spa Fon World of Contents.....

AND REMEMBER, Our slogan thisish: He who throws dirt loses ground!
Our credo every ish: Spa Fon better than ever forever!

Rich Hauer

# JIM STERANKO

## profile of a personality

**On** the chill night of April 1, I arrived in Sterankotown, Pennsylvania, having rodded my Chevy some 850 miles from Chicago in one swoop. I fought a lost feeling as I passed through the eerie, moonlit Pennsylvania mountains; the car radio kept me company.

It was past midnight, so really April 2, as I entered the Village of the Man I sought. I was safe, I fancied, as April Fool's day was legally past. No black magic conjured by Steranko could fall upon my hapless head now; I knew he was a veteran of magical arts! Reining my car to a halt by a pay phone just outside the town limits, I dialed Jim, praying the number would work and I was not really somewhere in Lovecraft's Arkham country. It did work, and the Jaunty One's crisp tones came to me there in that phone booth, where history was made when I chimed, "I'm close, Jim!"

It was DAMN cold that night, and I was where no Hauser had ever been before. There followed some wit from Jim, and my knees started to shiver perceptibly. The phone stuck to my hand, I think, as the sweat froze. There then followed lengthy instruntions on how to get from phone booth to Steranko's super-agent pad. Now my teeth started chattering, and my head almost shook off my neck. God, was it frigid! And all his fault!

Hanging up the phone finally, I stiff-legged it back to the car on cystallized legs, starting the engine to bring heat to the frozen car seat. Then, miraculously, I homed in to Steranko's apartment house without going exactly opposite where I was supposed to go. The pad: some fantastic super-gadgeted penthouse with fur rugs, space-age furniture, and hot and cold running broads, right? Wrong! The pad lay secluded in a leaning old Pennsylvania red-brick building. Inside, up two creaking flights of stairs, was Steranko's roost. Windows all tight shut, heat up, and lights on, Steranko throbbed within, like an exotic plant flourishing in a greenhouse.

I went from the cold extreme to the torrid, from the frigid outer world to the hot life within Steranko's threshhold. The next day, I was to say of the apartment, "Can I open up a window and let the steam out, Jim?"

The interview was conducted in about six hours, two madcap sessions of three hours each. In between sessions, a few hour's sleep on Jim's couch revived my stupored senses. That sleep saved my mind, and possibly my vision and hearing, too!

All the while he talked, Jim worked with deft strokes on a painting. A television and radio were constantly playing, I talked on incoherently, and there he sat painting amidst all the mania, a conscientious Imperial Ruler. He got no sleep that night, tho I napped briefly. And he got very little sleep the next two days, as we dashed around in New York from one place to another. New York was a magical mystery tour, with Steranko the guide: from Roy Thomas' apartment (many thanx for the hospitality) to Wally Wood's. From lunch with Dick Giordano (he picked up the tab tho your humble editor objected for a split-second) to Jeff Jones' place. In between sorties, Phil Seuling gave us sleeping quarters and nursed us along, with baloney sammiches for breakfast, etc. Truly, every door opened for Steranko and friend, and Steranko never stopped. Friend tried to stay alive and well, mainly.

And during that first night, during the interview, he was just as animated and unpredictable as he was charging about New York. That first night Jim, at various times, jumped up and showed me clever tricks his trained Belgian hare Wyatt could perform; he guided me around his apartment showing me paint-chipped walls hung with Richard Powers' paintings; he showed me his uncountable stacks of LP records; and he showed me many exciting unpublished originals of his own design.

And ever we returned to that room at the end of the hall, at the border-lands of reality, where Jim Steranko sits at his easel and works, walls stuffed with books ceiling to floor surrounding him, the Belgian hare moving around in its wire cage in the corner, the TV and radio pouring out their noise. And as he sat there that night he talked to a whirring tape recorder, his incisive thoughts never dulling.

The printed record follows. Read on, SPA FONers!

RICH: I've heard tell that Steranko isn't your real name!

JS: Yes, that's true! It's a little known fact that my real name is Lance Stardust.

RH: Great! How about sports. For instance, didn't you like broad-jumping in school?

JS: How about this scene. I've been doing a single all my life. I've gotta start doing a double today.

RH: Hey, what is this kind of talk?

JS: OK, forget it! I was on the tumbling team. You know, rings, parallel bars. Like, I enjoyed individual sports.

RH: (Noticing Jim's compact physique) How about basketball?

JS: (Looking with inquisitive stare at RH) Well, I was on the basketball team in the seventh grade, which <u>is</u> a stretch of the imagination. But I never played; just happened to be on the team.

RH: (Looking at a large-scale drawing of "The Shadow", that mysterious invisible sleuth of pulps, radio, and comic books) Why did you do this, Jimbo?

JS: I was experimenting with a new technique. Actually, I love "The Shadow." I don't know if I ever told you, but I became good friends with the two men who wrote "The Shadow", Walter Gibson and Bruce Elliott. They're both drinking buddies in New York. Bruce Elliott's a magician, and was editor af the old DUDE and GENT mags and a dozen other mags. I called him up one day, and he knew about me, and we became great friends. He's like my father in New York.

Walter Gibson is one of the most prolific men <u>alive.</u> He wrote most of the "Shadow"

novels. Man, he turned out two complete 60 to 80 thousand word novels a month. I think that's as impressive as hell! He had a battery of three typewriters at the time, and sometimes he'd work till his fingers were bloody!

RH: Did he tell you that before you drank or after you'd drunk?

JS: Well, I'm just telling you what he told me, Rich.

RH: Do you like Shel Silverstein?

JS: Yeah, I think he's really funny! I'll tell you who knocks me out. Gahan Wilson fractures me with his cartoons.

RH: Yeah, he's morbid. And he does it with such a twist. To change the subject, what about Raquel Welch?

JS: I don't dig her; she's too phoney.

RH: You mean, as an actress?

JS: No, I mean as a sex symbol. She just tries too hard. And if you've gotta try.....

RH: I do dig her. She's a giant, and her face has those tremendous protruding cheek bones. She's not beautiful, no classic beauty, but there's so much of her. She comes over pretty strongly to me.

(Looking over Jim's shoulder as he works on painting..... SALEM commercial on the TV in the background. In the foreground, Jim's painting is "Springtime fresh".) Isn't it hard to work in watercolor like that?

JS: This isn't watercolor. This is acrylic. It's water-solubel, but it's a very fast medium -- it dries quickly. And that's what I like about it.

RH: (Looking at an already completed painting now. A girl in a mysterious setting -- long, white gown, running past a fantastic gnarled old tree. In the background an evel-looking man approaches, hands outstretched in a magical gesture.) So you plan this for EERIE or CREEPY, huh?

JS: I did it with them in mind. I think I might be doing some work for them, covers primarily. They're prestige books, and the reproduction is very fine. In fact, I might do TALON for them (or for fandom alone -- see ad elsewhere in this issue for the news). It would be a labor of love, in any case. I'd outdo myself to get it just right, so that I could make a definitive statement about sword and sorcery and get it out of my system. Rich, you know, there are some things that are in you and just got to come out.

RH: But this story (looking at the art spread out on the couch) this "Let Them Eat Cake" is definetely going to be printed by Marvel.

JS: Yes, that's going to be in the first issue of their new horror number, TOWER of SHADOWS. You should pardon the expression. (It was retitled "At the Stroke of Midnight!") They wanted to call the books CASTLE of FEAR and TOWER of EVIL, but the Code wouldn't let them.

RH: Is that possibly because they're titles reminiscent of some bygone hairy-scarey titles? (Couldn't pass up that chance to plug EC, could I, SPA FONers?)

JS: Possibly. The Code felt they were too rough to use as titles.

RH: Boy, the Code really does put the dampers on horror, doesn't it?

JS: Ahh, you've noticed that, did you?
Well, I tried to do this story "At the Stroke of Midnight" in as good a taste as possible. I try to do all my stories in good taste. That's why there's no blood, or anything I believe to be objectionable. There is the guillotine; there are the people screaming. We even wondered if those things could get through the Code or not.

RH: Once before when we happened to be talking I evoked a comment from you about Al Feldstein, who wrote many of the EC scripts. At that time you said something to the effect that Al was a top scriptwriter in the development of horror comics. How bout it?

JS: Well, I think those books (EC's) are impossible to top. They were just too damn good. Good men writing and drawing! And since only two or three writers wrote all of them, they had tremendous control over the quality.

RH: "At the Stroke of Midnight" is a horror story, your first to my knowledge, and you were trying to tell it as effectively as possible. I was wondering if you thought Feldstein accomplished that when he wrote for the EC horror titles? Do you think he was very effective?

JS: Yes, I do.

RH: And do you think his snap endings were snap endings?

JS: They were. They were among the most memorable of comics ever printed.

RH: And they were a happy medium between quality and popularity. High quality and high sales, which is hard to accomplish in any field.

JS: Should anyone ever get that close again to effectiveness and quality, I would consider it a phenomenon. Unless of course you get high calibre men like Gaines and Feldstein together again doing horror.
In fact, one of the things I began to realize about EC is that they took ideas from many sources. Many of their concepts appear to have been adapted from stories by many authors, from various books and mags. So I think that accounts for much of their sucess. They've used ideas from here and there. I guess that's the only way to write; I have nothing against it. I get ideas from here and there. Something I'll read, see, hear about.....
Hey, I'll tell you something that you might get a kick out of, being a Sherlock Holmes fan. Do you remember "The House of Fear" and "The Musgrave Ritual" (where they went downstairs and found the treasure) and do you remember "The Hound of the Baskervilles?" Well, those three films were the inspiration for "The Hellhound of Ravenlock."
If you're going to wrtie a story about Hollywood, you've got to know about Hollywood, right? And if you're going to write a book about atomic submarines, you've got to know about atomic submarines. So, conversely, you've got to write about what you know about, the things you dig -- like all the haunted houses, and crime stories, and mysteries.
Hey, do you think this painting is a little too low-key? (Speaking about a superstud detective pb cover he's working on) There are no wild colors in it, obviously.

RH: Well, that girl in the background there is a little subdued, pale.....

JS: Well, that was intended. Incidentally, I

wanted to tell you a thing or two about composition. I composed this thing in bed one night. And it works out; let me domostrate. It's based on a series of triangular forms that look together. Here's one (demonstration) All of the triangles are looked together, to give a sense of dynamic symmetry! It's so difficult to do a comic page with that same power. You can't give enough time; you can't compose each panel to make every one a masterpiece.

INTERLUDE: Ye Ed.'s nap.

RH: Hey, can I use this little baby (Jim's tape recorder) for interviewing Bill Gaines in NYC?

JS: Of course you can..... But why don't you use that little kamakazi job you picked up? (An aspersion cast upon my little Japanese make taper, which hadn't worked after the 850 mile car ride.) Did you get that in trade for comic books or something like that?

RH: Jeez, I'm getting dumped on all over this fair state! First a guy tries to swindle me in a turnpike gas station, now you come up!

JS: They saw you comin'..... They said, "Let's swindle this rube!" (Belly laugh) You know, that thing of yours should have been a washmachine. Did you see the way it was agitating the tape when you tried to use it?

RH: Hey! How 'bout a little soap in your venerable mouth? That's a <u>good</u> $121.00 mail order set you're talkin' about. Only when you talk into it, it stutters! Maybe it'll work for Gaines and Feldstein.

JS: Look at the design of the thing..... it really impresses me. Look at the sheer <u>flow</u> of lines. (Laughter) Look at the pure <u>organic</u> shape of it.

RH: It's pretty stream-lined, isn't it? It's alive -- look at the way the cord is coiled!

JS: Alive..... I mean, it positively looks like a machine right out of the future! Are the parts made out of plastic, too?

RH: Yeah, all plastic; made in Japan, y'know.

JS: No <u>kidding</u> Mine was made in Germany. Now I vill <u>speek</u>; <u>you</u> vill <u>lissen!</u>

RH: Vee haf veys of deeling with you! I vill not tolerate dis in-sub-or-din-ation!
You know you can't get away with Gestapo talk, Jim. I'm a crude kraut from way back!

Hey (getting back to earth) you told me that you hadn't had any formal art training. Now, that's incredible to my mind. Did you read books; was it a natural feel followed by a lot of self-betterment, or what?

JS: Well, one day, late in grade school or early in high school, I had an accident with the bicycle, and I broke my leg in two places. Since then, I've stayed out of those places! I was laid up in bed a long time. So what do you do when you're laid up in bed a long time?

RH: You get a Mr. Potato Head doll and stick things in its potato head!

JS: No..... you get a couple of old books. Dig up your old comic books, and you start drawing. You wind up in bed for a few months and you'll turn into a comic book artist, too. I never told that to anyone before, either. You know why?
Because I just made it up.

RH: You rub your temples, you get serious, and then you hand me a fat line. Nice.....

JS: You know, Hauser. This is the dullest interview I've ever given. I mean, I've known Howard Rogofsky's wife to ask better questions, like "Where's the ladies powder room?" Or, "Where's Howard? Has anyone here seen Howard?" (Laugh)

RH: OK, I've got a goodie for you. Like, "What are you going to be doing in the near future?"

JS: Now you've fouled up! I wanted to tell you who was stronger, the Hulk or Thor.

RH: What character would you like to do if you went to DC?

JS: I'd like to do my own character, a new character. I felt Nick Fury was entirely my own after I started doing him, except the name was the same. That's why I threw out all the old characters, like Gabe and Dum-Dum and Sitwell, and put in all my own: the Countess and the Gaff.
Now, to answer your previous question about art training seriously..... Ever since I was a kid I loved comics. Even before I could read, I had comic books. My uncle used to bring home big bags of comics he'd bought second hand, a penny apiece, or two for a penny. I was hooked.

RH: Did you save all of them?

JS: Yes, I saved them. I had two tremendous collections destroyed. They must have been worth a fortune. You asked me before about sports..... well, I dig personally competitive sports, like fencing. But I did spend a good deal of my childhood inside learning how to draw.

RH: Do you value any books that taught you a lot? I see a book ANATOMY for the ARTIST on your bookshelf up there. I see it hasn't been bent a lot.

JS: To tell the truth, I got most of my training out of comic books; I learned everyone's distortions. But I got into comics entirely by accident. When I started in the business, I said I would change the whole comics industry. And that's a pretentious thing to say. But consider the things that've happened at Marvel. You know, they used to have the title in banners or bursts or flags across the top. Now everyone's working them into stonework, etc. I started that, and again I had to fight for it. They didn't want to do it. I started zip-a-tone again. People had abandoned that kind of effort. I love to tell stories, so I also got them to let me write. To give you an example of how seriously I take writing, let us discuss this "At the Stroke of Midnight" story (Tower of Shadows 1). I did the art and text for it.
We discussed at a session what the plot for this horror story in the first issue should be. Stan gave me an idea of a couple of plots that he had in mind. They were mostly fantasy plots like his old AMAZING ADULT FANTASY books used. Like, how the spacemen landed on a world and nothing was there, and they looked around, then jetted away. And in the last panel, there was a little kid holding a balloon, and that was the world they'd landed on. That's an example of the kind he wanted to do again, with those little snapper endings.
So I told him I thought it would be a mistake doing those again, and not taking advantage of a peculiar trend that's happening right now -- the phenomenal sucess of DARK SHADOWS, ROSEMARY'S BABY, and all the paperbacks that are being published right now with the real supernatural quality about them. So we talked, then I came home and wrote my story, putting in some nice subtle bits of business like the picture, the witchcraft angle, the name of the house itself, "Shadow House." Now, I didn't intend it as an EC type story, to answer your next question, but I'll tell you what my thoughts were in that direction.
I believe there is a place for narrative. I believe you can have to have narration so that phrases that noone could ever say can be employed. That's the reason that Marvel's books and DC's have been stilted, the lack of use of narration. For example, the second page of "At the Stroke of Midnight" starts out with a whole block of narration without the characters saying anything. You get a feeling about the surroundings and the house itself:
"An icy wind blew across the water, whispered to them as they began to descend the steps cut into the very face of the bleak rock itself. Marie wondered how the house could ever have been built, or why the wind had not toppled it from its lofty perch. From the base, the climb seemed like an eternity as it wound an ever-angular path upward.

You could never have those characters saying those things. They could only talk about it in an objective way. But their silence, combined with the narrative effort, has a positive force of direction.
Another thing I've done to make it more realistic is to purposely eliminate all thought balloons. You never know what these particular characters are thinking, and it's unrealistic in story-telling to hear thoughts. You know..... you see someone moving about furtively in the dark, and you hear his thoughts. That transfers the story-telling; that would be incongrous -- the voice-over technique.

RH: Marvel has relied a lot on the thought balloons in their super-hero stories to convey the mental state of their characters, their thoughts, doubts, troubles, etc. What you advocate is a real break from Marvel's formula.

JS: I would take it very much amiss to think there was any technique I could not use simply because it was not of the editorial policy. The story will be printed just that way, unless the Code butchers it even more.

RH: How much authority does the Code have in keeping something from being printed?

JS: Complete! Every page, every panel is censored. Every line. This is always a headache. Strange as it seems, dirty books and magazines which are available on the same newsracks as comic books are not censored. You can put out books packed with naked broads and there's all the freedom to do that. But in the comics we try to put out food, clean books and we're censored. Why do we have to be censored when there are books available right now with more violence, more sex, and that are more distasteful than anything we'd ever do? That's my point.

Frankly, I would very much like to drop the comics Code, and if Marvel or any other company wanted to drop it, now's the time. After all, the comic book business is doing well; it's at the top now.

The Code is just another way of getting around that parental responsibility. Frankly, there are more crimes committed today than ever before, percentage of population-wise. So we have the Code, but we have more crimes. If the Code was working, would this happen?

RH: That's an incredible truth you point up. I heard on the radio very recently where J. Edgar Hoover, chief of the FBI, released figures saying that 72% of the serious crimes are committed by people under 25 years old. Now, 50% of the population is under 27, or thereabouts, so three-quarters of the serious crimes are committed by half of the population, the younger half. And these are people who grew up under the cimics Code, which came in strictly about fifteen years ago. So during what the psychologists call their formative years, these people were having their juvenile literature censored. That didn't work, obviously.

JS: People know when they're watching the movies that what they're seeing isn't real.--it's fantasy. Same thing with what they see on the page in comic books. Using the Code is putting too much stress on comics, and avoiding parental responsibility.

RH: I see an ancient gun over there; do you collect guns?

JS: No, but I collect swords -- edged weapons!

I just got a chance to buy that one and did. Speaking of guns, that brings to mind the West. You know, I always wanted to do a Western. And I asked Stan if I could do a Western book. The answer was No.

I dig Westerns, especially the new flicks the Italian Westerns with Clint Eastwood, for instance. They're very exciting, and I think you could do a book utilizing some of those techniques. You know what kind of Western I'd like to do..... an Epic!

I sat down trying to think of a title for a Western that had never been used before, something that would typify the West, would be nothing else but the West. GUNSMOKE says the West. So does a title like STAGECOACH. I came up with a title finally for my one and only Western story, the definitive one. Dig it..... SUNDOWN. I had a couple of alternates. One was BULLETS, the other DUST. The shortest, simplest way to state the West, probably the best way to state anything.

RH: SUNDOWN was your choice, methinks, because it's got that poetic touch to it. Also, it brings to mind the sadness, the melancholy of the West.

JS: Right.

I'd like to throw in all the stuff that's been done before, only I haven't done it. It would be all new and fresh to me. You know, the angles through the wagon-wheels, the old steer lying there reduced to nothing but bones and skull. I would lay it in there pretty thick -- my statement about the West.

I work in themes, making a statement about the human condition. For examples, I write stories dealing with greed, revenge, hatred, Passion, fear, jealousy, murder. These are all themes, and each one of my stories is developed around one of 'em.

I'd hoped to do a Western employing one of these themes. It would encompass all of those things about the West that we've loved viewing those old Republic Randolph Scott movies. I imagined a lot of beautiful color work. The skies, orange and pink skies at sundown. Vast deserts, everything with the whole epic feel about it. But I never got the OK for the book.

When I'm writing, I decide what I'm going to depict in a story. If I'm writing a story about greed, I collect my thoughts about it, figure out what I'd like to say about it, what my attitudes are. I think many of the comic books today are without a statement. You know, the good guy fights the bad guy, and the good guy wins. In the Fury books,

STERANKO

Fury didn't always win. In the first book, "Who is Scorpio?" he didn't catch Scorpio. The ship Scorpio was in cracked-up in the desert and burned because of a gunshot in the gastank. No, Fury didn't always win, and good doesn't always win. In fact, in comic books, the bad must never win; the Code will not let the bad win.

RH: Does the editor or publisher resent the Code a lot?

JS: Well, I think Stan Lee resents it, if only for the production hold-ups.

RH: What is it that gives a person his credentials for censoring comics?

JS: I imagine they're the most morally upright persons you could ever know.

RH: Oh, are they virgin?

JS: I suppose so.....

RH: But right now in your carreer you're most enthused about painting?

JS: It's a challenge, and somehow I've always been annoyed by the idea of failure.

RH: You can't stand to fall into a production rut, can you?

JS: No, I'm not a ditto machine. I'm a creative guy, and I can't stand to see my artwork or my personality development stand still. It's got to be moving all the time. Once you stand still, you might as well just die. Take a look back and see how many hacks there are in comic books -- they're just turning out jobs, just adequate comic book jobs, not saying anything socially. My work has to say something, and right now I've been working on comic books.

I believe that in the final analysis of an artist's work, you have to consider the story telling style of that artist. In the horror story "At the Stroke of Midnight" a more realistic, more literal style is used than I use in telling, say, a super-hero story. I didn't want to employ the devices of the super-hero story, which mainly can be attributed to Jack Kirby: forced perspectives, the hands and feet shooting out of the panels, the wild action. It just doesn't happen in real life. So, for a more precise, horrorific atmosphere, believability has to be used. The reader has to get involved in the story, and not in the pretentiousness or virtuosity of the artwork. If a reader goes through the story and stops to say, "Look at that crazy angle he put in there. Isn't that great! Look at that panel! Now..... what's the story?" the chilling horror effect is lost. That shouldn't happen.

I don't consider myself an artist; I consider myself a story-teller. Now, when I think of an artist, I think of someone like Reed Crandall, or Al Williamson, or Hal Foster. There is a bunch of guys whose work is art! Primarily, I'm a writer. I have written a number of books, I write my own stories by choice, and I consider drawing a peripheral accomplishment, expedient to getting the job done the way I want it.

You can't imagine the disappointment in writing a story, having someone else do the art, and when it comes back, it's nothing like the original concept! Or conversely, drawing a story, and the writer puts in words that are completely meaningless to me. There is a loss of the power and dynamics that were intended for the story. That's why I also color my own work, so that there's a complete marriage of ideas, like one hammer-stroke!

RH: Isn't it true that many comic book artists would rather have someone else write their stories? Wouldn't they rather just worry about the illustrating?

JS: Well, some artists wouldprefer to write their own. Ditko, Wood, and Gil Kane are examples. Kurtzman was one of the very best. He layed-out all of the EC war and MAD stories. Feldstein did the science-fiction and horror. So, there are five guys who have written their own, and some of that stuff is magnificent! Eisner is another one, Foster and Raymond too, if you want to get out of the comic book field. However, there are a lot of hacks around who shouldn't be writing their own stuff.

I feel this way about any job, whether it be as a brain sugeon, or a comics artist, or just shining shoes. I do my very best! For example, if you did a movie that took three years of your life, that time is equivalent to part of your life. And though no single comic book story has ever taken that long to prduce, I've been working in the comic book field for three years now. Al my work in one collective effort represents three years of my life, and I want it to be the best possible representation of my personal development. That's why I can't stand still for people editing my work over the top of my head. There have been some terrible changes made, completely diverse from my original concepts.

I can't compromise my principles or my integrity. I put a helluva lot of work into my stories, and I expect my editors to consider that fact. In "At the Stroke of Midnight" there's a lot of Baroque architecture, and a lot of engraved woodwork. One page has 22 panels in it. I didn't have to put all that in; I could've taken short cuts. That's what I mean by having a lot of personal integrity about my work. I get paid even if I put the minimum on the page. I just expect consideration for all the extra work.

Now, I'm convinced that all these ideas work, simply because they've been successful.

If I were an editor, I'd get everything my way. I'd be a sonabitch to work for, but I think you'd see some really outstanding, if not extraordinary work.

RH: Would you like to be the editor of a comic line?

JS: No. It'd be too much work with all those temperamental guys like me around. (Laugh) Also, being an editor keeps one from drawing. Infantino, who is a tremendous artist, is an editor now; he's in an administrative capacity. So we've lost his work, some of the very best. He's stopped telling stories.

RH: As an editor, then, you wouldn't give an artist ultimate say over how a story is to be, either.

JS: It depends on the artist. Kirby, when he was doing the old BOY COMMANDOS and NEWSBOY LEGION used to get scripts that he thought were ridiculous. He'd just toss 'em out and start from scratch, and the books he did himself were damn fine comics!

I think Ditko had it much his own way when he was working for Marvel, and it's repeated itself with me. Some artists have tremendous telling power. Ditko, for example, knows how to get right to the core of a story. That fellow understands the comic book media very well.

RH: What do you propose for the Sword and Sorcery character you've developed -- Talon. You haven't told a story with Talon yet, have you?

JS: No, though I have a story for Talon written. I feel that a Sword and Sorcery format cannot be successful under the confines of the comics Code. I think the basis for Sword and Sorcery is Sex and Blood!

RH: That was Robert E. Howard's belief, with good plot thrown in for the money.

JS: Howard had the definitive Sword and Sorcery concept. I don't think you'll find a S&S character that's more successful than Conan. I haven't found one yet.

I think certain other little things by other authors are good. I love the Fritz Lieber "Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser" stuff; it's magnificently written. But for sheer powerful writing, I think Howard says it all. That's the formula.

Did you see DC's new S&S character? It's sheer prostitution. I wouldn't call it Sword and Sorcery; it shouldn't be called that. The Code doesn't like anyone to use swords to begin with. They don't like bladed weapons -- that disturbs them. I think the closest thing you can get to Sword and Sorcery in the comins is "Thor." And if you'll remember back to "Viking Prince"..... that was sheer S&S. But where's the power?

There's a problem translating from medium to medium. What you read in words in Conan takes some kind of an artist to depict that heroically. I drew FURY in the only kind of style he could have been drawn in. It was a Zap! kind of art. FURY was contemporary; he was Today, and could only have existed in that kind of style.

I remember that at the last convention we were at, a lot of the fans were surprised to see TALON in the different style, a very classy brush-and-ink style. But really, a Sword and Sorcery character should only be done in that style, an illustriative style like Frazetta or Foster works in. For horror, I use a completely different style, and this is one thing that I think very few comic artists have..... summed up in one word: RANGE! Can you use the same kind of style to do a crime story, to do a love story, to do a war story, to do a horror story?

Each one of those types of story requires a different style.

RH: When you get used to one artist you like, usually his art looks about the same no matter what the story subject matter. It's easy to pick his art out at a future date; I've never seen completely different styles used the way you do. It's a damn amazing contrast between story-telling styles that you've achieved.

JS: Well, it works.

RH: I was so surprised when I saw the horror story that I didn't know who'd done the art till I saw the signature; I didn't think you'd drawn it!

JS: I don't think an artist should get locked into one style. But you do see the earmarks of my story-telling style in "At the Stroke of Midnight!" The continuity in the panels is part of my style, too.

RH: Since you feel you are more a story-teller than an artist in comics, you must have some serious intentions when you tell a story. How about telling a horror story, which has been your latest effort. What are the elements in telling a good horror story?

JS: In any horror story or suspense story, the secret is in foreshadowing the conflict. For example, on the first page of "At the Stroke of Midnight" you see a silhouette of the house on the hill, bare trees all around with limbs like gnarled hands. Now you know God damn well -- that ain't no Summer bungalow! And on the second page, when they climb up the steps, and the wind's blowing, and it's cold, with the moon and the trees all around, there comes the line: "Above them Shadow House waited." You already know something's gonna happen. And that's the way to tell a successful horror story -- where you know, something's gonna happen, but you don't know what, or when.

RH: Now, the conflict with the surroundings seems to be very important in a horror story the way you describe it..... conflict always being necessary in one form or another to provoke interest.

JS: There are elements which have to be in every story in order for it to be good: conflict, crisis, climax. It must always be that way.

RH: And in a horror story, usually the crisis and climax are right on top of each other.

JS: Yes, in order for the twist ending to work. You'll notice where I held back the events of the guy killing his uncle. That was deliberately held back until the very last moment, and there's a flashback to tell it. And it you'll notice further, it wasn't told with a thought balloon then. Rather than a thought balloon, I figured the woman would say, "How'd you ever have the guts to push him off the cliff?" And then the shot of the pushing is shown in black and white, like a memory on the page. Memory is intangible, so I interpreted it in black and white. This is a dramatic effect with a momentary shock value.

RH: Do you think the conflict with the surroundings, the atmosphere, is truly important to horror?

JS: Very important. In fact, it's absolutely neccessary. When we first talked about doing horror stories, Stan wanted them to take place in contemporary surroundings, like at a peace rally or at student demonstations. And I thought, for Christ's sake! Horror just doesn't take place in broad daylight. You've got to have an atmosphere of horror. And you've got to build on that mood: swamps, graveyards, mad houses, and haunted castles.

RH: Can you think of one horror movie where the action was completely modern? The setting?

JS: No, and I told Stan. Now, he was trying to build a horror formula on his previously successful super-hero formula. And there is merit in what he wants to do -- bring the horror stories up-to-date. But frankly, I could not think of one circumstance where it would work. So who's gonna think of a whole year full of them?

RH: That brings ROSEMARY'S BABY to mind, which was very much in the modern swing, but..

JS: Yes, you see, you've got to revert back again to the house.

RH: Right, as they come into the house, and look around, they see all the wierd characteristics of the house and neighbors. The horror developes from that point on. But the setting was modern New York. They blended the two together very effectively.

JS: Now, while we're on the movies, you can tell the fans who read your book that almost all my techniques come from the movies. And I'll tell you something that very few comic artists ever think of. You see, it's important in a film what shots follow each other. It doesn't work when there's a long shot of a lone rider riding across the desert, with a million miles of sand between him and the camera lens and then suddenly there's a close-up of his eyeball. You can't do that because it's too much of a jolt to the audience. So,

you take a long shot, then a closer shot, and there's smooth transition through a series of shots. Continutity -- I call it structural rythm.

In "At the Stroke of Midnight" you can see these movie techniques working to tie the story together into a single powerful memorable unit. Also, there is something I use called geometric rythm. It has a subconscious effect to tie the story together. As an example, if you recall the Captain America story of the funeral of CA, there is a wake sequence that was designed like a stained glass window. And obtrusive ballooning in this case tends to diminish the subconscious effect of the page; here is a case where I'd like to make balloons more unobtrusive, another big campaign of mine.

Now, about the geometric rythm. Let's refer to that CA funeral page. On that page are four medium-size panels on the bottom, with four taller panels directly above them, and with one big panel at the top flanked on each side by a small panel. If you look at that page and, in your mind, eliminate the balloons, even the coloring on that page tends towards the stained glass church window effect. Now, it was never meant to be noticed directly. What it was meant to do was to convey a subconscious impression.

This is another technique in the strip whoih, linked with the structural rythm, and the coloring, tends to create a tone about the story. Also in the funeral sequence, I have knocked out a lot of the background and made it all black. This use of color, or lack of use of it, is meant to convey the tone as well. The black brings you down; it's very sombre.

RH: Do you aim at the subconscious a lot with your art?

JS: Yes, the subconscious, absolutely. Eventually the reader will forget the story, but he'll remember, "God, what a book that was! It made me sad -- or elated -- or horrified!" This has to do with all the images in the book. (Not the words.) The images themselves create a tone.

Now, in a super-hero story, I don't think you can use all the techniques I've talked about in the same ways. This gets back to the fact that an artist should have range. He should be able to do different types of stories differently. So, you see why my style is different with the various stories. It would differ entirely in love stories. Super-heroes have all the muscles and require a certain construction. And I think Jack Kirby defined the super-hero formula to its ultimate power. Who else brought it to his power?

RH: You mean the action, charging, fighting, the steel-spring muscles, th.....

JS: Don't write a book, Hauser! I just asked you a question.

RH: OK. So, who else could do it as well as Kirby without using his formula? Well, I can think of only one other comics artist. He's a past master, in my book, my personal choice: Lou Fine.

JS: Well, Lou Fine's books were not as powerful as Kirby's were they?

RH: He was great on THE BLACK CONDOR, a flying super-hero. And a lot of his forte was that he could draw the flying, swooping, gliding BLACK CONDOR like nobody else could! I will admit that Kirby did draw with more impact, and his action was more rookem-sookem. But Fine was no slouch on fight scenes, and could draw someone getting slugged in a way that it looked like he was losing teeth.

Whereas, Kirby could create the great scenes of a whole slew of people fighting and catapulting about, really action-packed. For impact, I say you're right, Kirby takes it! But for beauty mixed with excitement, my choice is Fine.

JS: Getting back to the range of an artist, Fine's style would have been great for romance books. Everything was well drawn; he put everything in its place. He used a fine line and nice textures. And, (are you ready for this), Kirby's best work was in his romance books.

RH: You know why I'll accept that without surprise? Frazetta's best work came in love, also.

What's it gonna be after art, Jim?

JS: Movies, Rich. I'm very enamored with live film, because you have to work not only with images, and a script, but with motion! You've still got composition and structural rythm, but you've got much more than that. The damn things move!

Getting back to comics, you know, strange as it seems, my stories have been taking me longer and longer to do. You'd think that after doing twenty or thirty stories, I'd be getting faster and faster. But once I've used a specific technique in a certain effect, I discard that use of it. I have to come up with new ways to render stories; why repeat myself?

You know, the first three SHIELD books I did were working from Jack Kirby's layouts. And the difference between his way of telling a story and my way are like day and night. You can see it if you compare the first one I did all myself with the three before.

Hey, how many meals did I miss? Let's find some food, Hauser!

* * * * * * *

And on that note we leave our visit with Jim Steranko, that fantastic flying machine.....

We are sorry that we could not bring you Jim's impersonations of Humphrey Bogart, Clark Gable, Boris Karloff, Peter Lorre, Sidney Greenstreet, or Kirk Douglass, also highlights of the time spent with Jim.

But they lose something in the typing.

We brought you all that could be put on paper of our visit with Jim; there is a lot to him that defies transcription..... A very unique bundle of enrgy is this Man.

FINIS

# IN THE Adventure Tradition of *Burroughs' TARZAN* and *Howard's CONAN* ....TALON

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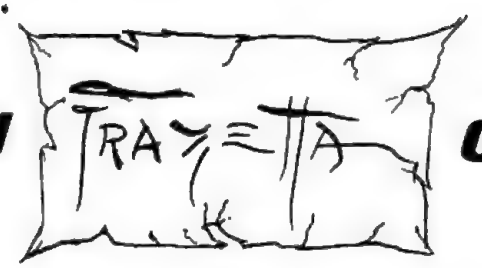
# THE MODERN FRAZETTA CHECKLIST



Arranged and Annotated for the Collector
by Alan Wong and Rich Hauser

GLOSSARY: Numbers in parenthesis ( ) denote the page-length of stories. Comments occur at places to help separate the major from the minor and the rough from the refined appearances. Happy trails to you!

I. COMICS: ME PUBLICATIONS

Bobby Benson's B-Bar-B-Riders
#9 Cover by Frazetta (Not detailed)
11 Cover by Frazetta
13 Cover by Frazetta

Durango Kid
#1 Untitled - Origin of Dan Brand, "White Indian"(7)
2 "Blood on the Frontier" (7)
3 "The War of the River" (7)
4 "Brothers of the Wilderness" (7, exceptional)
5 "Trees of Doom" (7)
6 "Pirate Fury" (7)
7 "The Battle of the Dungeons" (7)
8 "Massacre" (7)
9 "Tory Treachery" (7)
10 "Sleep of Death" (8, one of the finest)
11 "The Blood of Valley Forge" (7)
12 "River Gauntlet" (7)
13 "The Trail of the Traitor" (7).
14 "Voyage into Danger" (8)
15 "The White Wolf" (6,much sought after)
16 "The Underworld of the Wilderness" (7)

Ghost Rider
#2 Cover by Frazetta
3 Cover by Frazetta
4 Cover by Frazetta
5 Cover by Frazetta
(All the above are attractive works; the masked mysterious Western character on his white stallion is Frazetta's kind of subject matter!)

Manhunt
#11 "The Robber of Rainbow Buttes" (7) (A Trailcolt story, still cartooney, but better than Trailcolt 1's lead story.)
13 "The Rodeo Robbers" (7, reprinted from Trailcolt #1; very cartooney and rough)

Straight Arrow
#3 Cover by Frazetta (sharp inking)
22 Cover by Frazetta (cartooney)

Thunda
#1 Cover by Frazetta;
All interiors by Frank. This comic is the only one ever to be 100% Frazetta, and goes down as an unsurmountable high point in comic adventure strips. The subject matter is "Thunda - Lord of the Jungle", the Tarzan-like character Frank originated and executed himself, story and art, in this first issue.

Tim Holt
#17 Cover by Frazetta (Ghost Rider cover, one of his best using the GR)
21 Cover by Frazetta (Ghost Rider)
23 Cover by Frazetta (not easy to tell it's his)

Trailcolt
#1 "The Rodeo Robbers" (7, rough)
White Indian
#11 Reprints the Dan Brand stories from Durango Kid 1-4
#12 Reprints from DK 5, 9, 10, 11
#13 Reprints from DK 7, 12, 13, 16

FAMOUS FUNNIES PUBLICATIONS

Buster Crabbe
#1 Backcover by Frazetta (An anti-dope ad)
4 Cover by Frazetta
5 Cover by Frazetta
"The Maid of Mars" (11, a long sci-fi yarn by Frank, Al Williamson, George Evans, and Angelo Torres. It's a bonanza, along with the cover)
7 "Prayer Works Wonders" (1)
9 "Boy Scout's Jamboree" (1)

Heroic Comics
#65 "Sunny's Sunday" (2, with Williamson)
66 "Adrift in a Rowboat" (2)
67 "Three-year-old Hero" (2)
"The Scared Life-Saver) (2)
69 "Beyond the Call of Duty" (3)
"Memorable Memorial Day" (3)
70 "Always Around When Needed" (2)
71 "He Stayed Behind" (1)
"He Gave His Life to Save Lives" (2)
72 No title. A story about Sergeant Kouma's war heroism. (3)
"With Only a Shovel" (2)
"He Chose to Fight" (2)
"Red Cross New Method of Artificial Respiration" (1)
73 "Heroism on the Korean Front" (2)
"Bivouac" (2)
75 "Brought Back to Life" (1)
81 Reprint of "Boy Scout's Jamboree" from Buster Crabbe 9.
82 Reprint of "Boy Scout's Jamboree" (1)
86 "Only Doing His Job" (3)
87 "Stranded in a Mine Field" (3)
94 "Cindy is Saved" (2)

Famous Funnies
#202 Reprint of "Prayer Works Wonders" (1)
209 Cover by Frazetta
210 Cover by Frazetta
211 Cover by Frazetta
212 Cover by Frazetta
213 Cover by Frazetta
214 Cover by Frazetta
215 Cover by Frazetta
216 Cover by Frazetta
(Famous Funnies 209-216 are the celebrated Buck Rogers covers, each worth framing.)

Movie Love
#8 "William Holden" (6, with Williamson)
10 "Burt Lancaster" (6, excellent romantic rendering of Lancaster)

Frank Frazetta  Robert Barrett  Helmut Mueller

(Foto taken during Mr. Barrett and Helmut's two-day stay at Frazetta's home. See SQUA TRONT 3 "The Trip")

FAMOUS FUNNIES PUBLICATIONS (cont)

Personal Love
#24 "A Love of My Own" (8)
25 "Too Late for Love" (7)
27 "The Wrong Road" (8)
28 "Empty Heart" (6)
32 "Untamed Love" (8) (Frazetta's most astounding performance -- setting is the jungle, and the charging lion actually breathes.)
(All the above Personal Love issues are high points of Frazetta's comic art; don't let the subject matter fool you.)

DC PUBLICATIONS

Adventure Comics
#150 "The Ten Century Lie" (6)
151 "Sir Justin, Bronco Buster" (6)
153 "The Dud of the Flying Knights" (6)
155 "The Imitation Knight" (6)
157 "Camelot, U.S.A." (6)
159 "Knight of the Future" (6)
161 "The Flying Horse Swindle" (6)
163 "The Knight in Rusty Armor" (6)
(The above are Shining Knight stories, equalling "Prince Valiant" in background and beauty.)

All Star Comics
50 "The 37 Terrible Days" (3, not part of the JSA story.)

All Star Western
#99 "Batalye -- Immortal Indian Warrior" (3, reprinted from Jimmy Wakely Comics #7)

Blackhawk
#118 "The Town Jesse James Couldn't Rob" (3)

Gangbusters
#14 "I gallop with Danger" (8).

Gangbusters
#17 "I Wrecked the Cattle Rustlers" (8)

Jimmie Wakely
#6
7 "Batalye -- Immortal Indian Warrior" (3)

Mystery in Space
#1 "Spores From Space" (8)

Star Spangled Comics
#113 "The Black Cougar" (10) (One of his longest and finest DC jobs.)

Tomahawk
#2 "Texas Trailblazer" (4, with Williamson)
29 "The White Indian Chief" (3)
57 "The Million Dollar Tombstone" (3)

EC PUBLICATIONS

Crime Suspenstories
#17 "Fired" (6, with Williamson)
Shock Suspenstories
#13 "Squeeze Play" (7, a fine EC job; set with Coney Island as a background)

Weird Fantasy
#14 "Mad Journey" (7, with Williamson and Krenkel. Their pioneer EC job, but not lacking in any respect.)
20 "I, Rocket" (7, with Williamson and Krenkel)
21 Cover by Frazetta and Williamson.
Weird Science
#19 "The One Who Waits" (7, with Williamson)
20 "50 Girls 50" (7, with Williamson and Krenkel)
21 "Two's Company) (6, with Williamson)
22 "A New Beginning (8, with Williamson and Krenkel)
Weird Science-Fantasy
#29 Cover by Frazetta (The Buck Rogers cover)

TOBY PRESS

Danger is our Business
#1 "The Vicious Space Pirates (6, with Williamson. There's some special magic in this work.)

Billy the Kid
#1 "Guns" (2, with Williamson)
3 "The Claws of Death" (4, with Williamson)
John Wayne Comics
#3 "The Claws of Death" (9)
4 "Black Gold" (6)
6 "Murder Will Out" (10)
7 "An Invitation to Murder" (10)
8 "The Weeping Walloper" (12)
18 "The Ugly Duckling Bandit" (9)
25
29 "Black Gold" (6, reprinted from JW 4)
NOTE: All the Frazetta John Wayne stories are done with Al Williamson.

STANDARD - NEDOR

Black Terror
#22 "Violins for Villainy" (11, an early work in which Frank only did certain panels, apparently. Early, crude art)
24 "From the Black Terror Scrap Book" (1, the lower left panel of the splash page is the only Frazetta in this comic.)
Exciting Comics
#59 "The Deadly Quest (9, a Judy of the Jungle story, and not one of Frank's best jobs)
Real Life Comics
#50
52 "Leif the Lucky" (4, illustrating a Prince Valiant type story. The Shining Knight DC jobs are much more finessed.)
Thrilling Comics
#66 "Don't Argue with a Gun" (Text heading)
67 "There's no Feud Like an Old Feud" (6, the first of the Locie Lazybones stories, a take-off on L'il Abner. Denoted LL below.)
68 "Shutterbugs" (9, with Mayo)
"Everything's Vine" (7, LL)
69 "Cake Fake" (8)
"A Package for Pappy" (6,LL)
70 "Holiday in Hogbite Holler" (7, LL)
71 "A Bride for Kissin' Jim" (7,LL)
72 "Weddin' for the Widder" (5, LL)
73 "Lotions of Love" (6, LL)

Wonder Comics
#17 "The March of the Dinosaurs" (9, tho only certain panels are Fritz's. Early, experimental art.)
19 "The Silver Knight" (13, but Fritz does only the wolf and in some panels the heroine)

PRIZE PUBLICATIONS

Headline
#16
Prize Comics
#65 "Gnats to You" (12)
"Hot Tot" (7)
66 "Swami Rivah, Stay "Way from My Dough" (10)
"The Iron Man" (8)

Treasure Comics
#7 Not titled-- Tale of William Penn (4)
8 Not titled-- Tale of Benjamin Church (4)
(The above Prize Publications work is all early Frazetta, and as a result rough)

MISCELLANEOUS COMICS

Bware
#10 Cover by Frazetta and Sid Check (Two comics exist with this title and number; only the issue dated July, 1954, has the Fritz cover)
Fight Against Crime
#5
Forbidden Worlds (ACG)
#1 "Demon of Destruction" (8, with Williamson)
Jesse James (Avon)
#20 "Chief Victorio's Last Stand (7, with Williamson; splendid horse scenes)
Strange Worlds (Avon)
#3 "The Invasion from the Abyss" (7, with Williamson, Wood, and Torres; a fabulous combination of their talents. Also a very nice Wood Kenton of the Star Patrol story.

Tally Ho (Swapper's Quarterly)
#1 "Snowman" (with John Giunta; Frazetta's first comic work, but hardly typical of his ability; he draws only the crocodiles and the villain in an otherwise lackluster story by Giunta.)

Western Fighters (Hillman)
#11 (6, with Williamson)

FUNNY ANIMAL TITLES (STANDARD)

NOTE: TH = Texthead drawing, only one illustration, about 1/4 page, atop the center text story.

Barnyard Comics
#13 "The Goldfish and the Sparrow" (TH)
"The Flying Pig" (TH)
"The Grateful Bear" (TH)
14 "Jimpy Jumps" (TH)
"Jungle Prince" (TH)
15 "The Homeless Cat" (TH)
"The Walking Stick" (TH)
16
17 "The Talking Giraffe" (TH)
"The Bold Brave Moose" (TH)
"The Kitten Who Wanted to Swim" (TH)
18 "Circus Tickets" (6)
"Beppo the Monk" (TH)
"The Mouse and the Moose" (TH)
"The Greedy Mole" (TH)
19 "Barney Rooster" (7)
"Hucky Duck" (2)
"The Cats with the Beautiful Tails" (TH)
"The Cleverest One" (TH)
20 "Barney Rooster" (7)
"Big Ears and Little Ears" (TH)
"Ollie the Ostrich" (TH)
"The Forest Concert" (TH)
21 "Let's Always Be Friends" (TH)
"The Stubbornest Mule" (TH)
"The Lazy Beaver" (TH)
22 "The Peculiar Duck" (TH)
"Freddy Bear to the Rescue" (TH)
"Hucky Duck" (7)
"Mike and Jerry" (TH)
23 "Miggles and Bojo" (TH)
"Scaredy Cat" (TH)
"Firefly's Light" (TH)
24
25 "Hucky Duck" (2)
"Bashful Cricket" (TH)
"The Talented Bear" (TH)

Buster Bunny
#1
2

Coo Coo Comics
#34 "Busy Billy Beaver" (TH)
"The Turtle and the Pelican" (TH)
"Percy the Puffer-Fish" (TH)
35 "The Lonely Turtle" (TH)
"The World to the Wise" (TH)
"Kitty on the Keys" (TH)
36 "Ferdinand and His Friends" (TH)
"Pat Pony Heads the West" (TH)
37 "Maggie the Magpie" (TH)
38 "The Elephant Who Never Remembered" (TH)
"The Playful Bear" (TH)
39 "Ferocious Lamb" (TH)
"Barnyard Hero" (TH)
"Flying Possum" (TH)
40 "The Wingtown Drummer" (TH)
"The Ambitious Fox" (TH)
"The Lion and the Hyena" (TH)

Coo Coo Comics (cont)
41 "Supermouse" (9)
"Dodger" (6)
"Clunky the Elephant" (TH)
"The Lamb Who Wanted to Be Somebody" (TH)
"The Showoff" (TH)
42 "Dodger De Squoil" (5)
"The First to Crow" (TH)
"The Strange Little Creature" (TH)
43 "Small Fry" (TH)
"Johnny Sheds His Pride" (TH)
44 "Supermouse" (9)
"Butch and Buttercup" (5)
"Wishful Willy" (TH)
"Chauncy the Chick" (TH)
"A Cure for Chubby Chipmunk" (TH)
45 "Butch and Buttercup" (5)
"The Bunny Who Wanted to Know" (TH)
"Fisty" (7)
"Hardback Softheart" (TH)
46

Goofy Comics
#20 "The Cowardly Lamb" (TH)
"Lucky Bird" (TH)
"Blinkie's Bones" (TH)
21 "The Poor Little Woodpecker" (TH)
"The Bugland Mail Goes Through" (TH)
22 "Clumsy Bear" (TH)
23 "Randy Raccoon's Problem" (TH)
24 "The Bold Little Antelope" (TH)
"The Wanderers" (TH)
25 "The Eagle Who Wouldn't Fly" (TH)
"Ernie the Elephant" (TH)
26 "The Rabbit Who Wouldn't Run" (TH)
"Wingless Wonder" (TH)
27 "The Reckless Horse" (TH)
"Lonnie the Lone Wolf" (TH)
28 "Roaring Cat" (TH)
"Cometo the Pup" (TH)
29 "Forest Hero" (TH)
"The Timed Pup" (TH)
"The Adventurous Elephant" (TH)
30
31 "The Colt Who Wanted to Sing" (TH)
"Spotted Snob" (TH)
"Little Brown Dog" (TH)
32 "The Beautiful Swan" (TH)
"Lazy Bear" (TH)
"Strong Little Elephant" (TH)
33

Happy Comics
#20 "Crooner Cat" (TH)
"The Big Badger Hunt" (TH)
21 "High-Flying Squirrel" (TH)
"The Friendly Spider" (TH)
"Sharpy and the Salmon" (TH)
22 "Robin Redface" (TH)
"Wandering Kitten" (TH)
"The Conceited Squirrel" (TH)
23 "Beautiful but not Dumb" (TH)
"Silky and the Wren" (TH)
"Ernie the Earthworm" (TH)
24 "Golden Horse" (TH)
25 "The Friendly Lion" (TH)
"Dan Uses His Head" (TH)
"Willie the Weasel" (TH)
26 "Dobo the Dog" (TH)
"The Silent Monkey" (TH)
"The Silly Eagle" (TH)
27 "Chocolate and Vanilla" (TH)
"The Just-the-Same Mouse" (TH)
"The Eating Contest" (TH)
28
29 "Flippy the Monk" (TH)
"The Talkative Mouse" (TH)
"Eager Beaver" (TH)
30 "The Wistful Bear" (TH)
"President Mouse" (TH)
"Coalie the Lamb" (TH)
31 "Woodland Olympics" (TH)
"Jerry for President" (TH)
32 "The No-Hound" (7)
"Herbie" (TH)
"Miserable Mouse" (TH)

Happy Comics (cont)
#33 "Diamonds and Pebbles" (6, a much treasured item by Frazetta collectors. Cinderella type fairy tale.)
35
36
37

Spunky Comics
#1
2

Supermouse Comics
#1 "Gnicky the Gnu" (TH)
"Bobby Bunny Runs Away" (TH)
"The Sad Crow" (TH)
2 "The Quiet Pup" (TH)
"The Lost Chipmunk" (TH)
"Willie the Weasel" (TH)
3 "Kimi" (TH)
"Unhappy Animal" (TH)
4
5 "The Foolish Fawn" (TH)
"The Armor-Plated Softies" (TH)
6 "Goofy and Gus" (TH)

MAGAZINE MATERIAL

Blazing Combat (Warren)
#1 Cover by Frazetta
2 Cover by Frazetta
3 Cover by Frazetta
4 Cover by Frazetta

Castle of Frankenstein (Gothic Castle)
#5 Two interior Burroughs illustrations by Frazetta.

Cavalcade (Skye Publishing Company)
Vol 4 #15 "The Perfect Gentleman" (2)
Vol 4 #17 "Indian Summer" (1, a full page wash)
Vol 4 #18 "The Giantess" (1, one of his best erotic fantasy pieces.)
Vol 5 #10 Reprint of "The Giantess" (Loss of detail in enlargement.)

Creepy (Warren)
#1 "Werewolf" (6, Frazetta's last full brush and ink story. Not lacking in any respect)
2 Cover by Frazetta
3 Cover by Frazetta
4 Cover by Frazetta
5 Cover by Frazetta
6 Cover by Frazetta
7 Cover by Frazetta
9 Cover by Frazetta
10 Cover by Frazetta
11 Cover by Frazetta
15 Cover by Frazetta
16 Cover by Frazetta
17 Cover by Frazetta
27 Cover by Frazetta

Dude (Skye Publishing Company)
Vol 6 #16 One drawing on inside back cover.
Vol 7 #1 "Cattin' on the Couch" (1)

Eerie (Warren)
#2 Cover by Frazetta
3 Cover by Frazetta
5 Cover by Frazetta
7 Cover by Frazetta
8 Cover by Frazetta

Gent (Skye Publishing Company)
Vol6 #? "The Gent Zodiac" (Twelve interior illustrations depicting the women of all horoscope's signs. Quoting FF fan Alan Wong: "Sex fiends should latch onto this one!")
Vol 7 #1 "Sex in the Afternoon" (1)

Horror & Fantasy (Sari Publishers)
"Special Edition of Movies International #7"
Reprint of "The Night They Raided Minsky's" Movie Poster featured as a two-page spread

# "Fritz" Frazetta's FUNNY ANIMALS

## HERBIE

By Betty Cummings

## TALENTED BEAR

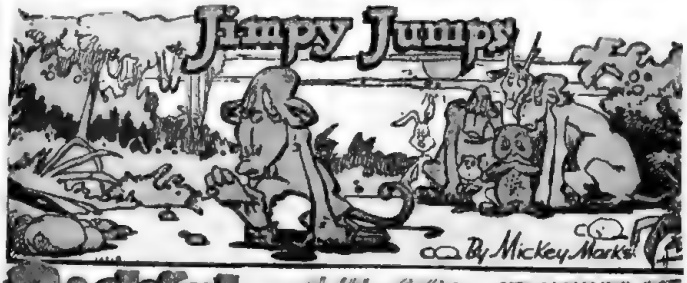
By Uncle Andy

## HARDBACK SOFTHEART

By Mickey Marks

## Jumpy Jumps

By Mickey Marks



## The Ambitious Fox

By Betty Cummings

## Bashful Cricket

By Elizabeth Starr

## The Rabbit Who Wouldn't Run

By Elizabeth Starr

Mad Magazine (EC)
#90 Backcover by Frazetta
106 Backcover by Frazetta (Great whimsy concerning Tarzan and his ape "Pals")

Monster Mania (Renaissance Productions)
#2 Wrap around cover, front and back, by Frazetta. (Prehistoric scene done in an undisciplined pastel way. Unusual FF)

Spa Fon Fanzine (Fantasy Incorporated)
#2 Cover by Frazetta. (A Johnny Comet head. Out of print.)
#4 Various interior sketches by Frazetta. (Out of print)
#5 Cover by Frazetta. (Your're holdin' it!)

Squa Tront (Weist Publications)
#2 "Tiga" newspaper pilot. (Redoing of "Last Chance" strip from Witzend #3, using FF's original script.)
#3 Pencils of the eight "Flash Gordon" dailies FF did(for Dan Barry in the early fifties)

Witzend.
#1 "Savage World" (With Williamson, Torres, and Evans. An unpublished Buster Crabbe Comics story. Excellent comic work.)
2 One illustration by Frazetta.
3 "Last Chance" (Mentioned above under "Squa Tront 2 heading.)
4 Back cover by Frazetta

HARDBOUNDS

President Eisenhower's Cartoon Book (National Cartoonists Society)
1 plate, a portrait of President Eisenhower

Edgar Rice Burroughs - The Master of Adventure (Canaveral Press) 6 plates by Frazetta

Tarzan and the Castaways (Canaveral Press)
6 plates by Frazetta

Tarzan at the Earth's Core(Canaveral Press)
6 plates by Frazetta

PAPERBACK COVERS

ACE : Burroughs books: all Cover by Frazetta
Back to the Stone Age (With Krenkel)
Beasts of Tarzan
Beyond the Farthest Star
Carson of Venus
Jungle Tales of Tarzan
Land of Terror
The Lost Continent
Lost on Venus
The Mad King
The Monster Men
Savage Pellucidar
Son of Tarzan
Tarzan and the City of Gold
Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar
Tarzan and the Lion Man
Tarzan and the Lost Empire
Tarzan at the Earth's Core
Tarzan the Invincible

ACE: Miscellaneous
Gulliver of Mars
Hunter out of Time (1 interior sketch, not cover)
Maza of the Moon
Swordsmen in the Sky
Warrior of Llarn

BALLANTINE BOOKS
The Autumn People by Ray Bradbury
Tales from the Crypt
Tales of the Incredible
Tomorrow Midnight by Ray Bradbury
The Vault of Horror
NOTE: All the above Ballantine books are reprints from EC comics.

GOLD MEDAL BOOKS
The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn
The Reassembled Man
Rogue Roman

LANCER BOOKS : Conan
Conan
Conan of Cimmeria
Conan the Adventurer
Conan the Avenger
Conan the Conqueror
Conan the Warrior
Conan the Usurper

LANCER : Miscellaneous
The Busy Body (Same illustration as the movie poster
Phoenix Prime
Reign of Wizardry
The Secret People
Torture Garden
Wolfshead by Robert E. Howard

PAPERBACK LIBRARY
Atlan
Brak the Barbarian vs. the Sorceress
The Serpent
Thongor Against the Gods
Thongor in the City of Magicians
The Tritonian Ring by L. Sprague DeCamp

POPULAR LIBRARY
The Creature from Beyond Infinity
Danger Planet
Outlaw World
The Solar Invasion

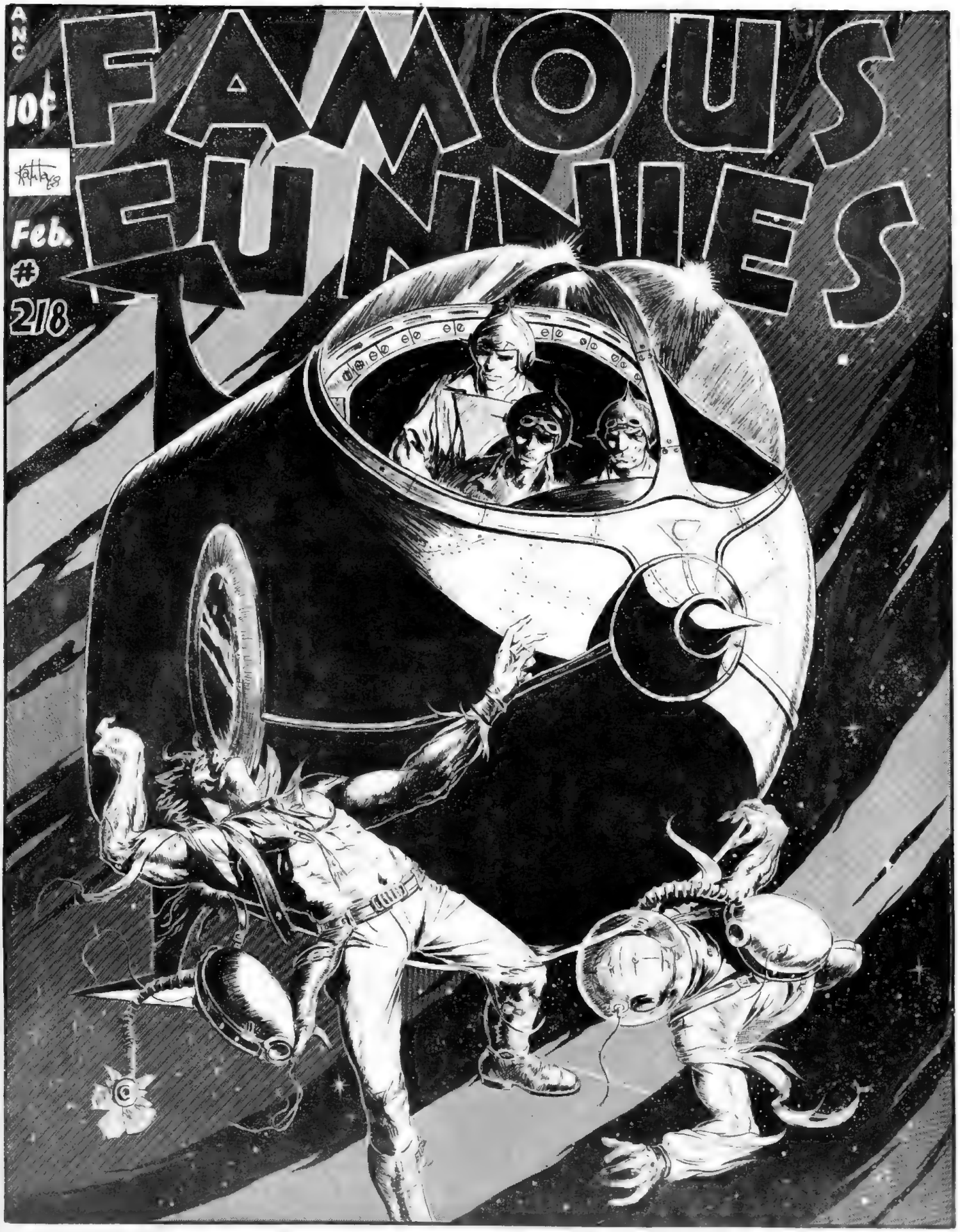
MISCELLANEOUS PUBLISHERS
Brak the Barbarian (Avon)
The Dangerous Age / Bad by Choice (Midwood)
(8 interior illos of Frazetta babes)
Nightwalk (Banner)
Perfumed / The Wild Week (Midwood)
(8 more Frazetta babe plates)
What's New Pussycat? (Dell; cover same as one of his posters for the movie)
Wonderful Wizard of Oz (Airmont)
(Cover with Krenkel; 8 inside sketches by RGK)

FRAZETTA MOVIE POSTERS
What's New Pussycat? (2)
The Busy Body
After the Fox (2)
Yours, Mine, and Ours
The Night they Raided Minsky's
The Secret of My Success
Hotel Paradiso
The Fastest Guitar in the West
The Wrong Box
The Fearless Vampire Killers

FRAZETTA RECORD ALBUM COVERS...
Fastest Guitar in the West (Roy Orbison)
Hotel Paridiso (Movie soundtrack)
Herman and His Hermits
Movies Are Better Than Ever - Jonathan Winters
The Night they Raided Minsky's (Soundtrack)
Welcome to the LBJ Ranch

MISCELLANEOUS FAN PUBLICATIONS

The Frank Frazetta Art Folio (Opar Press)
Attezarf #1 (House of Greystoke; to be released soon; 6657 Locust St.,K.C. Mo. 64131)
The EC Hardbound (Nostalgia Press; Reprints SQUEEZE PLAY from Shock Suspenstories #13)
The Girl From Parris (House of Greystoke; cover)
Johnny Comet #1 (Ed Aprille Publications; reprints first 9C dailys from FF's syndicated strip)
The Magic of Frank Frazetta (Chester Grabowski's spectaculars; Reprints the Frazetta Burroughs illustrations from the Canaveral Press books and others)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218
FAMOUS FUNNIES

DEMON STAR
ALGOL—TO THE ANCIENT ARABS, THE DEMON STAR! IN THE CONSTELLATION PERSEUS, ASTRONOMERS FELT IT COULD PROVIDE THE KEY TO SOME AGE OLD PROBLEMS —SIX MONTHS AFTER COMMANDER VERLON VRANA RECEIVED HIS ORDERS, THE CRUISER ARCTURUS WAS ON HER WAY—
Story and Art
Steve Hickman
BUT MIDWAY ON THE MISSION A GIGANTIC SHIMMERING CLOUD OF ENERGY BLOCKED THE WAY!

THE STATIC IS TOO POWERFULL TO GET TRUE SENSOR READINGS, SIR!
TRY THE ULTRA-VIOLET WAVELENGTHS ... AND PUT THE VISUAL IMAGE ON THE MAIN SCREEN.
GREETINGS, COMMANDER VRANA- ON BEHALF OF THE CYXXX!
WHAT!?
TRY ALL THE RECEPTOR BANDS AGAIN!
SIR, THE CYXXX EXTEND THEIR KNOWLEGE FOR OUR MUTUAL BENEFIT- PLEASE RELAX..

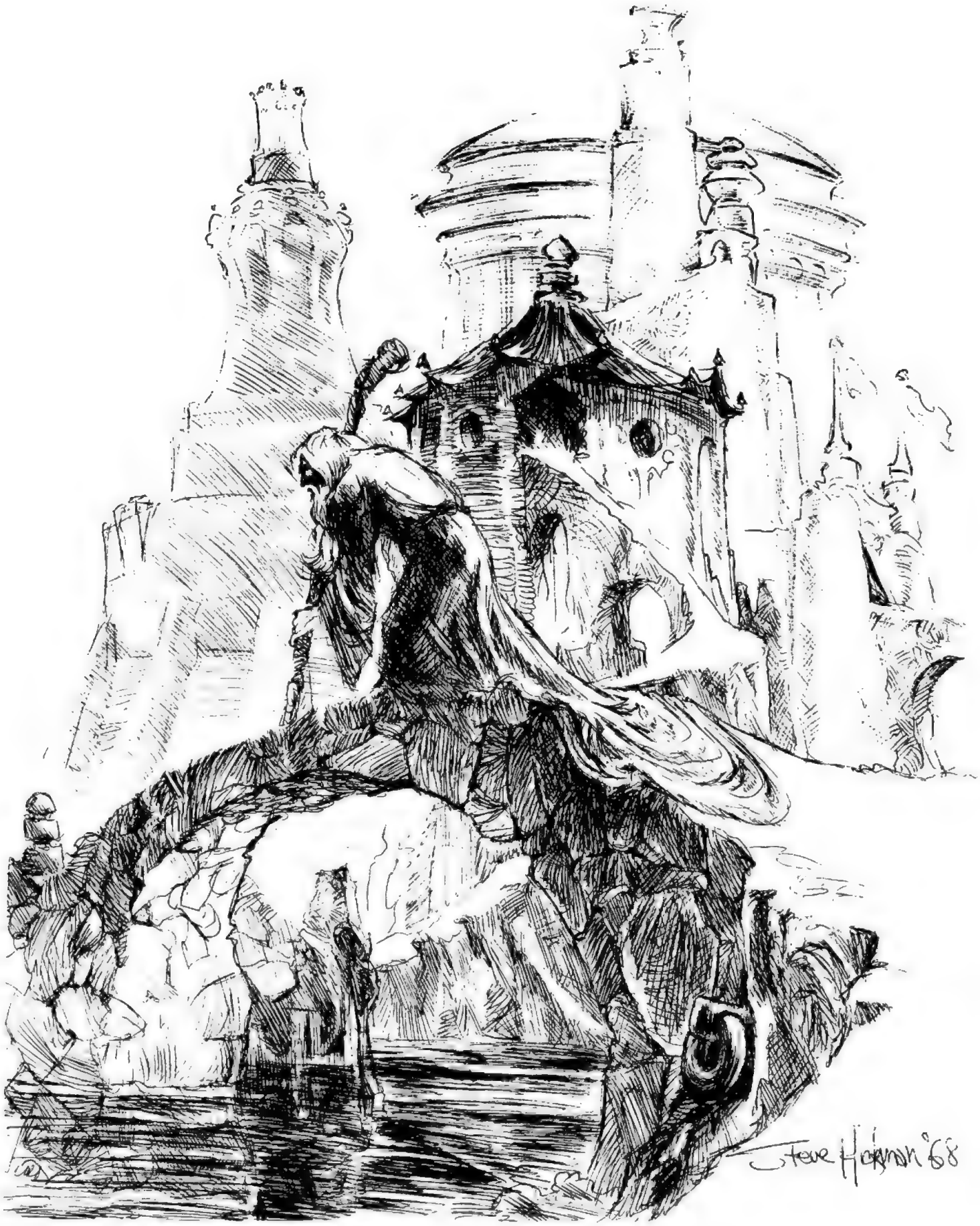
LISTEN, FOR WE ARE NOMADS, AND WISE IN THE LORE OF THE VOID. WHEN YOU RECEIVE ORDERS WE KNOW THEM—
AS WE KNOW THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF YOUR RACE
WE KNOW YOUR LIFE ENTIRELY—AS WE KNOW YOUR FRIENDS
WE, THE CYXXX, LIVE AS ENERGY, DEVOID OF WHAT YOU KNOW AS MOTIVATION BUT NOW WE REQUIRE AID—

HERE IS THE EMBODIMEN OF ALL THAT CAN BE KNOWN— SHE WILL SHOW YOU WHY CYXXX CHOSE TO REVEAL OURSELVES TO YOU...
I WILL MAKE DREAMS FOR YOU, VERLON VRANA, A TRUE DREAM OF WHAT HAS PASSED...
FREE YOUR MIND FROM FEARS THAT YOU MAY SEE MY SONG OF THE YOUTH OF CYXXX— WHEN WE WALKED ON SOLID EARTH AS DO MEN...

THE WAY TO OUR PRESENT IMMORTALITY WAS MADE KNOWN AND THE COUNCIL DECIDED TO FREE THE CYXXX OF MORTAL NEEDS FOR ALL TIME...
IT WAS IN THE CITY OF CLOUDS THAT THE CULMINATION OF CIVILIZATION WAS REACHED AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL LANDS WAS MADE ONE-
AND THE SUM TOTAL OF THE CYXXX CULTURE WAS DEPOSITED IN THE ETERNAL CITY...
WHERE IT REMAINED FOR AGES, AS THE SURROUNDING CITY LAY AND WHISPERED SOFTLY BENEATH IT'S LAYER OF DUST...
EVIL DECENDENT OF AN ANCIENT EXILE - WHO, TO AVENGE HIS ANCESTOR
UNTIL, LURED BY LEGENDS OF VAST KNOWLEDGE, THE DUST WAS DISTURBED BY AN
USED THE KNOWLEDGE TO TWIST THE PLANET INTO A PARODY OF IT'S FORMER SPLENDOR...

BUT WE HAVE A MISSION! WE CAN'T JUST RUN OFF AND SAY WE'RE HELPING FRIENDS!!
AH, AND THEREIN LIES YOUR GREATEST ASSET TO US! THE STAR ALGOL TOWARD WHICH YOU SO JOURNEY IS THE CYXXXS' MOTHER STAR-ALGOL 7 IS OUR HOME PLANET!
YOUR MISSION WILL PROCEDE ACCORDING TO YOUR ORDERS, AND THE CYXXX WILL PLACE AT YOUR DISPOSAL ALL THAT YOU SEEK, IF YOU WILL AID US IN FREEING THE AGE-OLD BENEFACTOR OF OUR RACE. BACK TO THE SHIP WITH YOU, COMMANDER, WE CAN CONTACT YOU AT ANY TIME!
WAIT! WHO IS THIS 'BENEFACTOR' YOU SPEAK OF?
AH, YES! IT IS ALGOL 7 ITSELF WHICH WE MUST CLEAR OF THIS BLIGHT. YOU SEE, CAPTAIN, THE PLANET IS SENTIENT, ALIVE!!

TO BE CONTINUED!!


Steve Ditko '68

by Randy Bracken 1969

"Even the sun...forsook Young Jacob, for it

ts rays could not breach the forest gloom."

# A PERHAPS FAIRY TALE

By John Guzlowski
From An Idea By John & Rich

The Illustrations: Randy Broecker

It was a snowy winter in the tiny Bavarian village of Vinenburg. And, with the coming of winter little Johann Werner felt not only hunger and sadness, but also the icy fingers of old Jack Frost. During this, the most joyous of all seasons for most children Johann's age, there was little for Johann to be happy about, for he had no parents.

But now, racing through the Christmas Tree Forest, Johann felt excitement and thrill as rarely he did. Long had he waited for this night and the coming of the gypsy carnival.

As he broke into the snowy clearing, the glow from the tents seemed to reach out, embracing the horizon. The music from the carnival brought thoughts of magic, and little Johann quickened his pace, throwing clumps of snow all around. Straightaway he found the tent he sought. There was to be found the gypsy queen and her fabulous jewel; much had he heard about her, even, yes, from the grown folk.

The few kopecs Johann had saved all year jingled in his seldom full pocket. Standing before her tent, excitement welled within him. Should he turn back? Could the rumors of her powers hold him away from the glowing doorway? Would she scoff at his small money and beat him?

With an impulsiveness characteristic of all children, Johann threw apart the canvas flaps and dashed in -- into the den of the gypsy witch. The kopecs jumped out of his pockets as if possessed, scattering onto the dirt floor. Afraid to look up, Johann fell to the ground, clutching for the spilled coins.

The old woman turned her eyes from a globe of crystal to look at Johann; and in a voice both mild and strong, she said: "Johann, why have you come?"

Johann looked up now for the first time. He found courage in her pleasant tone. "I have come to look into the magic jewel," he replied.

"Then sit down, my son, on that colored cloth." Seeing the coins in his hands, she added, "You need not pay with money. The faith you have in my power is enough."

And with these words, the wizened woman drew closer. About her neck, Johann saw a bedazzling gem. It captured his full attention with spangled splashes of inner light. Sore amazed, and transfixed by the light, Johann relaxed his taut face. Then, these words came from him:

"Once upon a time, a distant time, in a land far beyond the farthest sea, there lived a good boy, a quiet lad of the fields and farms. He was a help to his mother and his sisters, doing the work that was too difficult for them and too easy for the men to bother with.

"Often Jacob saw the men of his clan, laughing and joking, happy in their work as they cleared the fields and raked the harvest from the good earth. But Jacob was unrelentingly sad. He was only a woman's helper, a goatswain and a cook's assistant. Truly, he did tasks no man was required to do. He wanted to leave the comfort and security of the kitchen for the hard laughing sport of the men and the fields.

"So, perplexed by inner thoughts, he came to his mother one morning as she was preparing the breakfast meal.

"Jacob, why have you come," she asked.

"Mother, I grow tired of the kitchen. My arms are strong, they tire not. My legs have the power of the ten-year sapling; they also tire not. But this woman's apron, it drains the strength from my body. How can I become a man? Please, let me be a man."

"The kind woman had long expected these words from her son. Readily came her answer: "In our family we have an ancient tradition. To be considered a man, one must find the magic grimple."

"She then turned and left, tears filming her crystal blue eyes.

"Jacob found no comfort in her words. Their meaning escaped him. Although he then asked many what the Grimple was, the answers were always the same, "You must find the Grimple without aid."

"Never before had Jacob been so troubled. His mother's words haunted his days and plagued his nights. Sleep came seldom as he doubted on a meaning, and at length the search for the Grimple drove him to leave his home. With firm resolution and the sword his father won at the fair two summers ago, Jacob left the land of Kortac.

"For four score and four days, Jacob walked a lonely, tree-shrouded road. His cheeks lost their country-boy redness, and his frame grew gaunt from wont of sufficient food. The clothes that he wore turned to rags, and his simple sword began to rust in the scabbard. Even the sun, once his companion in days of joy and serenity, forsook him, for its rays could not breach the forst gloom.

"Despite all hardship, Jacob trod on, always reflecting upon the words his mother spoke when they parted last.

"One morning, while still in the great forest, Jacob awoke to gentle prodding. Slowly he opened his eyes and become aware of a most wondrous sight. Leaping to his feet, he shouted with elation, "Surely, 'tis an angel. I must be in heaven." And with these words still echoing through the forest, he began to dance a country jig.

"The young girl whom Jacob took to be an angel spoke, "Oh, sir knight, sir knight, please help us! My mother and I need of your assistance! Something dreadful has happened to our carriage; I believe the wheel is brokon."

"Jacob stopped dancing and looked upon the fair girl's face. He thought, she is not an angel, but rather something almost as beautiful, a princess. And she believes me a knight. How wonderful! Now the joyful smile

"Lady Blinkennod screamed, '**The trolls!**'"

RANDY BROECKER 1969

of a youth was replaced by what Jacob hoped to be a look of manly concern. Bowing low to his knees, Jacob spoke. "P'rhaps I can be of some service, dear lady."

"Together they hurried up the road.

"Rounding a bend in the tree-lined lane, Jacob's eyes widened in unbelieving amazement. Never before had he seen a carriage of such splendid richness and heart-quickening beauty. Diamonds of the largest sort, skillfully attached to the wheels of the coach gleamed, sparkled, bedazzled, and drew him stumbling yet closer. As he approached the side of the marvelous coach, he at first hesitated, then, with timorous fingers he gently carressed the carriage door's raised, sculptured figures and designs.

"His reverie, however, was suddenly shattered by a thin, shrewish voice, screeching at him from within the carriage. "What be you doing here, boy? Come you to vandalize the sparkling coach of an old woman? Oh, merciful gods, why do you frown on me, your own Lady Blinkennod? Don't I fast on the days appointed by that whining skunk, the Lord Equal High Priest Ner'con? Don't I give alms to the beggars on every First Crystal Clear Day? Woe, woe now you send brigands to slit my purse and my own precious throat!"

"Jacob staggered back from this mournful moaning. Falling to his knees, he stuttered, "Oh, madam, I am not a brigand, a highwayman, but rather a poor peasant boy, whom your daughter has enlisted to repair the broken wheel."

"Ah, what's that you say? A farm boy, a swineherd? Why, I knew it all the time! Yes, I did. All the time. Emma, show this callow fellow the tools. Repair the wheel, boy; be quick, and don't touch my carriage!" So saying, the plumb dowager sighed loudly, sank back into the velvet interior of the carriage, wheezed once, and began to snore. She was obviously asleep.

"Bewildered, Jacob turned toward Emma. She smiled reassuringly and led him to the tool chest, which held many familiar objects. Choosing the tools he thought he would have need of, he began to work.

"Several hours later, as the long shadows of late afternoon grew faint with the coming of darkness, Jacob stood up from where he had been working on the wheel. Droplets of warm perspiration coursed freely down the sides of his face, stopping for the briefest of moments as they met the corners of his smile, then going on to lose themselves in his tattered shepherd's shirt of fleece.

"Ladies," he said, "the wheel shall once again serve you."

"A fire was soon kindled, and the three travellers began to partake of a splendid meal. They spoke as they supped.

"Where are you coachmen?" Jacob asked.

"They are gone, fearing that the wheel could not be repaired before the oncoming of night," Mistress Emma replied.

"They were men of weak, simple hearts, peasants from that village which serves as the Western gate of this wilderness. Their minds were filled with childrens' tales of wanderers lost, of monstrously cruel creatures who take sustenance from the warm blood of living men, and of crushed skulls left along this woodland road as warnings to mortal men of beings insidious and ever-present." This Lady Blinkennod added.

"As Jacob listened to her, his knees shook slightly, and his eyes searched the bushes and trees at the perimeter of the clearing. His hands slowly played over the ground around him, seeking the reassurance which only the hilt of his sword could give him. He panicked, leaping to his feet, and whirling around with his eyes moving rapidly in an attempt to examine every patch of grass at once. The sword was gone!

"Boy, boy, what's wrong?" Lady Blinkennod shouted from where she sat across from him.

"Suddenly he stopped and mentally sighed. The sword stood leaning against the tool chest, not two yards away. "Nothing is wrong, your Ladyship. I am sorry that I disturbed you. There were ants in my shirt,"he lied, to conceal his fear.

"Minutes of silence followed, filling the clearing with a new air. Gone was the quietly beautiful evensong of the forest crickets. Gone was the star-like twinkling of the fireflies. Gone entirely was the magical atmosphere of sylvan enchantment. In its stead was -- a dreadful sense of darkness.

"Grip-a-grip-grip!"

"What was that?" Mistress Emma asked smally.

"P'rhaps, p'rhaps it is a tree frog," Jacob offered, looking upon her.

"Lady Blinkennod screamed, "The trolls!"

"They swarmed, dwarfed and misshapen, into the clearing. Saliva foamed from their twisted lips, and gnarled bludgeons whirled above their heads. Screaming gutteral cries to their satanic gods, the trolls lurched towards the paralyzed ladies.

"With the rapidity of a wound-crazed cougar, Jacob drew his sword and drove it into the leering smile of the nearest hell-thing. Blood, black with venom, spurted from its mouth, momentarily blinding Jacob. He staggered back against a tree, the sword still clutched in his hand. Not waiting to see if the hideous man-beast would arise, Jacob hurled himself into the troll pack.

"Throughout the night, the thudding of bare, rust-flecked steel resounded in the clearing. Jacob fought the trolls, which scattered and returned stupidly as each of thier fellows was brought down. As he smashed his sword repeatedly against the grizzled hides of the trolls, Jacob cried tears of futility until they no longer would come. Then, he merely fought, his arms growing sore numb from the weight of his sword. Blood darkened his face and stiffened his clothing. A dozen times he dropped to his knees, a dozen times rising with a war cry.

"And then came the dawn.

"The camp-fire, long unattended, smoldered weakly. Jacob, shoulders slumped with fatigue, watched a wisp of smoke spiral slowly toward the morning-blue sky. It was over, he thought. Yes, it is over, and I am alive.

"Soon he became aware of his bent, scarred sword hanging from his limp fingers. "You have served well," he proclaimed aloud. He longed to raise the blade to his lips, but he could not. He no longer possessed the strength.

"From the forest came a plaintive, tired voice: "Jacob, Jacob, are you all right?"

"Painfully, he parted his swollen lips as if to speak. Discovering, however, that he could not, he smiled and collapsed.

"Two days later, he regained consciousness in Lady Blinkennod's elegant bed chamber.

"Mother, mother, he's awake!" Mistress Emma called. "Oh, you were magnificent. We watched you from the carriage where we took refuge. You slew dozens of them; oh, how brave you are. The coachmen came back for us that morning. They could not believe that you alone were able to stand against the sabage monsters. You are a hero! Isn't it wonderful?"

"Hush, girl. You will talk his ears off," Lady Blinkennod said as she entered the room. "Is there anything that we can do for you, Jacob? Everything that we have is yours."

"Jacob raised himself to a sitting position and spoke: "Yes, madam.....if you would be so kind, can you tell me where I can find the Grimple?"

"Is that all?"

"Yes, Your Ladyship."

"Jacob, I am sorry that I can not tell you who or what a Grimple is. However, I can take

"One morning Jacob stopped at t

he foot of an awesome mountain"

you to the wisest man in this city. Perhaps he, with his almost infinite knowledge of man, beasts and nature, may be able to help."

"Jacob waited patiently in the vestibule of the Imperial Keskovian Library. Dust-filled streams of sunlight illumined the room, allowing him to examine its strangeness. Books were everywhere -- under chairs, on chairs, and around chairs. Ceiling-high stacks circumvented the room, giving it a false appearance of smallness. The volumes were thin, and they were long, and they were wide, and they were short, and they were stout. There were books with green, water-stained covers, and there were green, water-stained covers without books. Why, there was such a multitude of books that Jacob was afraid to take a single step for fear of damaging some single priceless volume.

"As he waited in thoughtful concentration, Jacob heard a voice echo mysteriously from behind one of the stacks, "Hmmm, hmmm, Pz 3-4326 myf. Hmmm, yes, here it is. Here it is. I've found it!"

"Sir, the Lady Blinkennod sent..." Jacob interrupted.

"Lady Blinkennod? Strange name for a book. Do you know the name of the author?" asked the disembodied voice.

"An old head, features hidden by wonderously long hair, greyed fully, peered from behind the mountains of volumes.

"You're the Jacob boy sent by Lady Blinkennod," the librarian shouted as if he had just made a fantastic discovery. "Now, what was that volume you were seeking, again?"

"To explain his problem to the hoary librarian took no short time. Finally, however, his plight was understood by the ancient. The old one found a leaf of paper and wrote rapidly for some time. After he had covered both sides of the sheet, he handed it to Jacob.

"Jacob, if you will read these books, these hundred almost forgotten volumes of human lore and suffering, you may be able to discover the meaning of the word Grimple," the librarian said and stepped from the room.

"In the Spring of the following year, Jacob came again into the room wherein he had first met the noble librarian. The young lad found him reflecting over an unopened volume.

"Sir, I have completed the books which you instructed me to read, but I still do not understand the meaning of the word Grimple. Have I failed to contemplate them correctly?"

"The ancient smiled knowingly and said,"You have studied them well, my son. However, you must not lose hope. The meaning of Grimple will grow apparent soon."

"How long do you expect me to wait? For a year I have struggled with these damnable volumes. Must I spend my entire life seeking the Grimple?" shouted Jacob and stormed from the vestibule.

"Gray clouds obscured the Autumn sun, magnifying Jacob's gloom and lonliness. As he sat resting, back against a rail fence, he imagined that the gods themselves had forsaken him. His mind turned to thoughts of the miles he had trudged since he in rage burst from the library. He recalled the men who had cursed him and the outlaws that had pursued him, he recalled the wine which had filled his belly with twisting pain and his mind with frightening phantasmagoria. He looked on the sores which had disfigured his limbs and the blood which had caked them. Finally, he recalled the friendship and love he had encountered along the way, and that he could not return home without the Grimple.

"The next morning's sun found Jacob again tramping upon the road, his eyes searching the dust as if there lay the Grimple. Nearing a hill he glanced up and stopped. A cross, surrounded by jeering multitudes, jutted crookedly from the ground. There hung a scarred, nearly naked figure from the wooden cross-beam.

"Jacob pushed his way through the mob.

"No one should be tortured like this," he screamed to the crowd. Then, turning to the man on the cross, Jacob asked, "Sir, how may I get you down?"

"The crucified's head lifted, and his eyes opened slowly. In a broken, pained voice, he whispered, "You cannot save me. I am dying. Those who placed me here have assured themselves of that. Nails were driven into my palms, and spears into my body."

"Is there nothing I can do?" Jacob beseeched.

"Yes, there is something. Give me water so that I might again speak to these who have turned from me."

"The crowd parted as Jacob hurried through it. Nearby, he discovered a pond. His kerchief heavy with water, he returned to the cross and raised the scarf to the man's lips. They did not move.

"Jacob bowed his head and left again for the road.

"For several days he wandered until one overcast morning he stopped at the foot of an awesome mountain. Harsh, deep-furrowed crevices radiated down from its summit. Jacob, unmindful of the possible dangers, began to scale the not so gentle slope.

"Exhausted, starved, and bleeding, he reached the zenith. Whatever had drawn him here now forced him to sit quietly as a tempest raged about him. Savage rains lashed his threadbare garments to his flesh, and he looked down upon all the lands he had trekked, now washed strongly with heavenly water. The winds grew and grew, driving all feelings from his senses, leaving him a numb, blind, deaf hulk.

"And so plagued, he began to think.

"His mind raced over the events of the preceeding year's time. Closely, he examined the characters of his father and the others who were called men. They all possessed attributes in common -- courage, kindness, knowledge, and ambition. Suddenly, Jacob realized that he, too, knew these qualities in himself. He screamed into the tempest, "I am a man; I am a man!"

"The rains ceased abruptly, and the clouds drifted toward the Eastern horizon. For the first time in a fortnight, the sun beamed its glorious rays upon the earth. Jacob rested for an hour, then began his descent.

"As Jacob came home again, his heart brimmed with happiness. He saw the green, even rows of corn, soon to be a new harvest.

"His mother was the first to see him. Running towards him, she cried, "Jacob, my son, you have returned to us a man!"

"Yes, mother, I am a man, but I have failed you. I did not find the grimple."

"Proudly she gazed into his eyes and said, "You have found the Grimple. It grew and appeared within you. It is Manhood."

EPILOGUE.....

Johann turned his eyes from the gypsy's gem.

"Do you understand?" she asked in a patient voice.

The boy thought for a moment, reviewing the visinn fresh in his mind. Then, in a manner defying his youth, he said, "Only through introspection and self-betterment can a person realize his dreams and ambitions."

The gypsy queen smiled, assured that Johann would succeed at everything he would attempt in life.

THE END

"As Jacob came home again, his heart brimmed with happiness"

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# Letters Snippets

Hope you like the two pieces (of Mike Cody art) I'm sending. The large one is a sample of the BARTOK strip he and I are doing currently for you. I think you're going to like it. It will run between 8 and 10 pages and I can guarantee plenty of Conan-type action, adventure, and atmosphere. I know it may sound like a rash statement, but I truly think that Cody may be the most exciting new talent to emerge from fandom. But I'll let you and your readers be the judge of that.

Starting with GRAPHICS SHOWCASE #3, we'll be doing some of the BARTOK stories, too, which I hope will coincide with the one I'm sending you for SPA FON #6.

GRAPHICS SHOWCASE #2 is finally ready at $1 a copy. You'll like to know that the great Berni Wrightson strip, "Uncle Bill's Barrel" (the one you raved over at the '68 scarp convention) is in the issue, along with a lot of Hickman and Kaluta strip work.

Tom Long, P.O. Box 8947, Richmond, Va. 23225
Editor, GRAPHICS SHOWCASE

All good news to us - Ed.

Enclosed is money for the naked girly issue with gobs of fantastic nudes running all over the shocking pages of fire and hell lurking and desiring for the flesh of the virgin male strolling whimlessly thru the fluid mass of the inner mind, a deep forest bounded only by the lapping waves of blood and gore left at a heavy price by those wanton usurpers of the fair maidens, issue it being No. 5.

F. Daniel Linder, Hickory, N.C.

We second that emotion! - Eds.

SPA FON 4 was terrific! The blue for front and bacovers was very effective, even tho the bo of my copy had some blue smears along one side. Another interesting thing was the two pairs of pages 3 & 4 and 33 & 34 in my copy. I'm going to put the extra GHOST RIDER repro on the wall.

The Fritz art you carried was great (naturally) and so was Wrightson, Kaluta, Hickman, and Harper. I can't find fault with this quartet. Favourite art: pgs. 11, 27, 29, and everything else.

This leaves me little room to comment on the monumental WS article. It was just the sort of thing I love to read. EC was genius personified! However, I prefer their later stories. The early ones seem weaker on art.

The poetry was a gas. Keep it up, please! Too bad the clown who wrote the first letter in your lettercol didn't know any poetry. ~~What a terrible~~ (I don't want to overdo it; I'm sensitive to criticism.) Verdict on SPA FON: perfect!

Andy Taskans, Winnipeg, Canada

Enclosed is money for ish 5 of SPA FON. Don't ask me why i'm doing it. i saw your ad in SQUA TRONT and was expecting an intelligent magazine, instead I got this. (Ish #4) Something i can understand.

You state that i write screwy letters. Huh (i.e. indignant snort)

As for stealing gravestones -- kiddie's stuff. I steal coffin lids. Without digging them up. More difficult. I then whittle them down to the size of a medium-size gum eraser and sell them as door stops or something equally obscene.

So to save ink, I will close this missive (always wanted to use the word missive in a letter.)

So remember Walt Kelly: THE GOD OF SATIRE and think about Ingmar Bergman, Frank Zapa, Bartholemew Gubbins, Simple J. Malarky, Jean-Luc Goddard, and maybe even Ruben Sano. i close with the following statement: the end

Wilhelm-Bill-William-Peabody Sherman
Normal, Illinois

Guys like this are loose? - Eds.

As to Spa Fon: I was plenty surprised at the rise in quality that every issue has been showing. The covers are exceptionally good and the blue tint goes very well.

All the articles were quite good and entertaining.

All the artwork is fabulous especially the Hickman, and Wrightson, though Kaluta is a wonder himself. I do wish, tho, that you would increase the size of the letter column and try to get some sort of discussion going rather than selected ramblings; the majority of the letter column wasn't very interesting. (And it is Smith, with no E-- my Ghod, how can you misspell Smith?)

I was wondering, Rich, if it would be possible to get a small plug, ad, or ready sheets in the next Spa Fon for the Houston Con '69? (I assume that the next Sap-Fon will be out by then...) The affair will be held June 20-22.

Tony Smith, Houston, Texas.
Editor, MYTHOS

How bout the boredom of this lettercol, and the free timely plugs-- don't they spice it up terrificly?- Eds.

I'm sure you are familiar with Frank Frazetta's cover painting for EERIE magazine depicting "Witches Tide." At any rate, it was so striking that I wrote a poem about it which later won the Student Award for Poetry at the 1967 Alabama Writer's Conclave. I would like to see what Mr. Frazetta thinks about it, as well as give him my thanks and appreciation for his work.

Jim Thompson, 1540 Valley View Drive,
Homewood, Alabama 35209

Is Chuck Clarkson a joke? If not, give it up.

Stephen Stanley, Kansas City, Mo.

Is that guy a joke? - Chuck Clarkson!

# SERAPHIM

Formerly the EC FAN ADDICT, SERAPHIM features quality artwork and informative articles on EC and related subjects. #4 features art by Roy Krenkel, Jeff Jones, Basil Wolverton, John Fantucchio, Ken Smith, and Don Rosa.

The price for #4 is 40 cents.

SERAPHIM #5 will be ONE DOLLAR and will include art by Al Williamson, Roy Krenkel, Berni Wrightson, Dan Adkins, and many more.

Order both from -

Thomas Veilleaux
42 Sterling Street
Waterville, Maine
04901

And be glad you did. An official SPA FON-affiliated fanzine!

I just recently received your SPA FON #2-4. I thought that SQUA TRONT was good, but "SP. F." is the fanzine to end them all!

I hope you do not reprint any of the same material that SQUA TRONT does; then it's a waste. I hope you two zines are working together, rather than as competitors.

In closing,
Before another Wertham decides
To kill us EC lovers,
Let's have some more articles besides
Those fabulous Frazetta covers!

Jim Gray, Margarita, Canal Zone

Hear that, Jer? Now the only trouble is, where is this fanzine called "SP. F." so's we can eliminate it!

Frank Frazetta's combination of a vast imagination and stunning technical ability never ceases to amaze and astound. I await breathlessly more text concerning his background, working techniques, and - oh - anything else for that matter. And I hope that you will continue to make reproductions of his work available within your pages.

Similar articles on Wallace Wood are sure to receive enthusiastic response. Similar articles on any of the EC veterans will recieve enthusiastic response. Say, why don't you do an article on enthusiastic response? Argh!

Bob Kline

Instead of an article, we're printing your letter, Bob. And congrats -- you've succeeded in summing up SPA FON 4 with a single four-letter word. Thanx - Eds.

Both SPA FON 3 and 4 were great. However, on the envelope, I am "Mack" and in the letter, I am "Mike". I be neither ... I am Mark. In the letter, a 75¢ refund was supposed to be enclosed...it was not. Perhaps that is why you signed the letter "Richer Hauser," I still have faith in you.

Your Chuck Clarkson was well done, but try to finish it off next issue. Harper's illo was one of the best in the ish. The poetry was good;it seems as if it will continue whether your fans like it or not.

The mini novel was good, though not poetry. Hickman's Conanesque character was fantastic.

About those rare comic covers your reproduce. You must either genuinely wnat to do something for the more unfortunate fans (most) who don't have these rare items, or you must be the biggest braggart in fandom. Personally, I think the first is true, since if you didn't want to do something for fans, you wouldn't entrust your rare mags to vicious printers who mangle things at every opportunity.

But why only Frazetta? Sure, he is one of, if not the greatest comics artist ever. But how about Williamson, Wood, Crandall, and other EC artists, as SQUA TRONT does?

Mark Barclay

Have to destroy your logic, since we have very mild mannered, polite printers. How bout the Williamson comic repro this ish? - Ed.s

Wright '201

# CHUCK CLARKSON

## ACE OF SPACE

## by rich hauser

SYNOPSIS: Last issue, Chuck, aided only by his incredibly precise mind, got himself into a royal jam. Accepting a mission to find a missing scientist and scholar lost on a remote planet, Chuck found his life in constant jeapardy. For it seemed an ex-criminal, also a master of demented science would go to all lengths to prevent his old enemy from being found. Two attempts on his life already having been made, Chuck refuses to say "Uncle" and even now sits in waiting to jet to the remote world, Sfonyx.

So enter we now the whacked out future that our intrepid adventurer, Chuck Clarkson, knows as his present:

CHUCK checked his expansive memory for the climate and living conditions on Sfonyx. The atmosphere: an adequate mixture of oxygen and nitrogen. It was a jungle world with a tepid climate; the only city, ultramodern Sfonyxopolis, engaged in the manufacture of mostly contraband articles. Also, the only spot in the known cosmos where Tellurium, the reknowned wonder-metal that baffled synthesis was to be found.

Reed, Chuck remembered, was supposed to be curing Sfonyxian natives in the jungle region known as the Mongolial Marsh. Reed was a modern Albert Shweitzer, risking life and limb on Sfonyx; he had gone there to carry out an Official Federated Planets mercy mission: his orders: cure the natives of the dreaded disease, limb-limbo. Chuck knew of the malignant blight known as lim-limbo, and he felt a hot sweat break out on his crotch as his thoughts dwelled on it. (His crotch?)

The bite of a carrier snicker-wasp deposited small wormlike flukes, which migrated to the glands in the mouths of Sfonyxian natives. The infected glands rotted within a week, and no longer manufactured a substance called urinicine. This was vital to turn a Sfonyxian's food, bowlfruit, into vitamin X-2, necessary for the preservation of their arms, legs, and mental infancy.

Chuck swung his bag from the spacious relaxobed after his mental excursion, and swung himself onto it. Tomorrow he would go to that notorious mongrel-pit of the universe, Sfonyxopolis.

There he would map his strategy taking all present factors into proper account. After all, he was picked for this mission because he had the hardest head to beat! The universe just naturally needed him as its ace detective, and only this realization kept him from quitting the FPP and mining soap on Boraxo-5, as his father had done before him.

Chuck shuddered at the thought of what the universe would do without men like him. Maybe some telescreen entertainment would come in nicely before turning in. Staring directly at the tuning dial of the screen, it came to life at his gaze. The first thing to come into focus was a live recital of the Martian ballet, di-rect from Mars. Chuck didn't mind ballet, God knew he had haute-cultur, but it was the sight of the Martians which sickened him. They were ungainly individuals with a red, bumpy epidermis, even inside their mouths. Whenever a Martian opened his mouth, the long slimy bumps which lined the red-faced alien's palate could be seen playing footsy with his pink tongue. This tongue, by the way, was another remarkable part of the Martian anatomy. It would change hue with changes in the Martian's disposition; a pleased Martian had a pink tongue, but if he suddenly became angry, it would turn green with yellow blotches. Since the Martians always had their mouths open for some reason or another, their tongues and slimy bumps were always visible, making them extremely sickening, yet highly predictable individuals. And now the sight of them leaping across the ballroom floor with the aid of their leathery wings, blancing each other on their nose-horns with elegant grace, was too much for Chuck.

He quickly switched to another channel with a glance at the tuning dial. A quick circuit of the screen's channels revealed such mind-teasers as the Plutonian Little League Baseball Tournament, a speech being made by the President, broadcast for the fifth time in the past three days, an ancient rerun of an outdated Tina Tolouse flick, and the middle of the two-hour daily News program, covering all points in the universe. With a wink at the tuning dial that almost spun it off the set, Chuck angrily turned off the telescreen. When were they going to do something about the abyssmal programming?

One last thing to do before catching some winks, final checkout with Hdqts. As Chuck glided over to the communications screen, a direct line with Commander Whitfield, he blew some snow that had fallen on his nose. Snow!? Instantly Chuck's computer mind knew something was amiss. It couldn't be snowing..... it was July! Totally shook by the implications of this discovery, Chuck failed to notice the cord for the communications screen had been placed in his path and was now becoming entangled with his feet. (No doubt Chemor had something to do with this.)

Chuck tripped with the grace of a Martian ballerina, over the lowly cord, which hadn't sense enough to get out of his way; he fell onto a bonx-hide chair, knocking it against the telescreen. (Thus he accidentally turned it on, unknown to now senseless, or rather unconscious Space Ace.)

If Chuck could have looked up, he would have seen a super-silent vibro saw cutting a swatch thru the duro-plastic ceiling plates. Completing a full circle, the piece of ceiling was noiselessly sucked free, and a hand produced itself from the hole. In the hand, an ultra-beamer!

The intruding weapon was swung mercilessly in all directions, emitting a white-hot laser ray that made short work of all it touched. Chuck was saved only by the bonx-hide chair, it having fallen atop him after bouncing off the com-screen. Only thus did Chuck avoid a maiming not fit for a mindless man on Mong.

Silence prevailed, and to all puroses the invader assumed death had been dealt deftly from his hand. The smell of the burnt aquafoam carpet was enough to make a normal man retch. But was Chuck a normal man? No..... it brought him to.

Throwing aside the saving chair, Chuck assumed all that had passed. Receding footsteps sounded above, and our hero was not to be denied a risk or two. Quickly he mounted a scored table beneath the aperture. A leap carried Chuck's arms to the edge, and a hearty hoist brought his head into the upper suite. A stoop-shouldered thug was leaving by the door he had entered! This was Chuck's man.

"Hi there," said Chuck, disarmingly. He was intent upon hoisting his body up for

followers, but his hands, sweaty with exertion, were slippery. His left hand slipped, something that Chuck Clarkson, ace detective, had not anticipated.

He hung precariously by his right hand, kicking his take-off table over below. Then, regaining his left grip he continued his move up, getting a knee over the edge as he looked towards the interloper. Chuck noted the man's face for a split second -- an ugly, sallow face -- then he scrambled to get up for the encounter.

But not swiftly as he could hope. Coming on with a brutish waddle-bear type gait, the assailant threw his knee straight into Chuck's knee-high chin. There was a terrific thud, because the man had a wooden knee! And when wood meets wood, thuds resound. Chuck buckled and twisted, going down upside-down. His catlike senses, functioning though his head pounded like a gavel, caused his body to twist gracefully so as to drop him on his feet, ready for anything to follow.

Instead, with a series of thuds, he hit the askew table headfirst. Only the hardwood skull of an ace detective saved him from certain death!

A second time the arm of death came from above; this time deadly bead was taken. Chuck was groping around in a state of semi-concious stupor, a condition familiar to the experienced space veteran. With the instinct of a blind homing pigeon, Chuck crawled directly toward the death ray's path. The only possible salvation was..... Commander Whitfield, who was watching the whole scene via his activated comscreen. Only Commander Whitfield's fateful shout of "Hands up!" caused a new balance, as the conditioned reflexes of a habitual criminal fired, and the ultra-beamer dropped directly onto Chuck's head. Pain brought back the space sleuth's fleeting conciousness, and he said "Thug!"

As fate would have it, the Security Corps was busting in on the intruder at that very moment, and there ensued a quick apprehension of the would-be killer above, twin tackles pinning his shoulders to the ground. He was through with his devilish attempts on a decent man's life.

Whitfield, detecting the meaning of the scuffle and grunting from the room above, sat back in his seat, uttering a prolonged sigh of relief. "Ahhhhh....."

PART II

For Chuck Clarkson, returning to conciousness was a cavalcade of blurred images and half-remembered nightmares. When he finally did emerge from the enveloping bandage of blackout he was aware of a number of hands propping him in a sitting position. Two more hands pummeled his face with repid, glancing slaps.

The dull monotone voice of Commander Whitfield ate thru the final veils of stupor. "Clarkson, Clarkson, are you all right? Clarkson?"

"Yes, chief," was Chuck's automatic reply. "I feel fine." But his head still throbbed, and his vision was blurred. He blinked and shook his face, drops of saliva getting into Whitfield's eyes. He slalped Chuck a little harder.

"Wake up, man," Whitfield prompted. Another round of resonant slaps encircled his face.

"Allright, I'm with you," blurted Chuck. "And quit slapping me," he added, now fully recouping his normal state of mind. He tapped his finger over the dried gash in his scalp as Whitfield spoke again.

"When I saw you hit that table, I thought you had broken your skull."

"I thought I broke the table,"mused Chuck heroically. "But what about that galactic dog. Did you catch him?"

"Well, the lieutenants here stopped him," Whitfield assured, pointing to two agents Chuck recognized on sight. "But....."

"Energy pad?" guessed Chuck.

"Energy pad." echoed Commander Whitfield.

"I thought as much," continued Chuck. "Another one of Chemor's henchmen. He makes sure we don't get anything out of them."

Looking around the room, Chuck noticed more familiar faces. Doctor Paurell, chief physician at FPP, was putting away the smelling salts he had used on the shamus. There was a skull-and-crossbones brand on the salts. "Drat, said Paurell, "failed again." He slid them into his black MD's case of plasti-metal, a compact box containing all the instruments of modern medicine a doctor equipped himself with in the field. He slipped the case into his shirt pocket.

Paurell was a curious sort, being a doctor and at the same time, Terra's foremost VD carrier.

Standing next to Commander Whitfield was Inspector Fletcher. And next to him was Space Ace Barney Check. The two lieutenants stood by the doorway, where another paunchy man was now entering. Sunlight pured thru the translucent window-wall to the East. Chuck had been unconscious longer than he suspected. (About 29 years, at last tally.)

The man entering the room took advantage of the momentary lull to go urinate in the bathroom. This set the stage for him as he returned to the gathering of top officials.

"Who's going to pay for all the wreckage?" he piped. The voice was that of Chuck's landlord.

"I've told you, man," started Whitfield. "The government will fully recompense you for the damage.

"I don't know," resumed the man. "The government can be slow when it comes to paying out; they take with a lotta speed."

"Everything will be taken care of, man," glowered Whitfield, waxing impatient with the intruding landlord. He probably just wanted to set up the FPP for a hiked-up repair voucher that would net him a few handy credits. Why couldn't the mind machines make any progress against the imperfections called greed and cheating. They must be very deep instincts, indeed.

"I knew I should never have rented to a space ass!" wailed the man.

"That's Space Ace, sir!" ejaculated Chuck.

"I've never met a bigger one," the man countered.

With that, the chubby housing overseer turned and plodded out of the living cell. "It should be padded in here," was his final line.. But it wasn't his final action, since he dropped a wireless microphone to the floor by the threshhold, faking a sneeze.

He was going to have credits from both sides before he was thru. Chemor already, and the FPP to follow. He chuckled in delight down the hallway.

"The case is just getting engaging now," Chuck offered. "Two attempts on my life in one day; or is it three?"

"Hasn't happened since I broke up that pluton-smuggling gang on Nabisco. They were tough cookies! Yes, I'm gonna crack this case or have it crack me. That's what a space ace is made of."

"But, man," Whitfield objected. "We know now that this maniac Chemor will stop at nothing. He's merciless in trying to stop you from finding Dr. Reed. Even his getting to Sfonyx is in the game now. Perhaps a new agent would escape his immediate attention..... perhaps we should undercover it from here out."

"Nix, Chief. Chemor would be onto any man you send out to Sfonyx. And I want to be where the action is when it breaks loose! By the way, how long is that all-day space discotheque open?"

"Uhhh..... well said, Clarkson!" replied Whitfield. "We haven't many an agent with the raw nerve you show. It seems the smarter they

are, the more they avoid danger. But not you, my man. Stay on this and lick it!"

"Ahh, yes," asserted Chuck, as Suzy swiveled in. Suzy was an animal-inspired girl. Beneath that suave appearance beat the heart of a savage, in that fierce left chest. Everyman present felt the heat of her body as she sauntered towards them. Chuck felt a chill ripple his spine.

Chuck swallowed and said,"Yes, Suzy? What can I do for you?"

"It's not what you could do for me, Chuck, it's what I could do for you..... How about coffee and some sweet rolls?" she purred.

"Sweet rolls, coffee, anything from you, Suzy!" said Chuck.

"Alright then, I'll go get something real sweet for you, Chuckie," she offered.

She turned then, and if there was one weakness a Space Ace was subject to, Chuck could fell it well within him as his eyes fastened on her sculpted hips.

"Now get on your way," said Space Ace Barney Check, "there's man talk in here," he added dramatically.

Everyone but Check followed her and undressed her with their eyes as she swiveled out of the room.

"Spaceport at 4:30 this afternoon?" requested Whitfield, sharply bringing the group back to the sordid present.

"Yes, Sir. I'll give what I've got while I've got it to give," added Chuck, obviously pleased with his quick turn of a phrase.

"Check!" Chuck snapped to bolster things a bit.

"Chuck," said Check, "you'd better check your chronodial now and make sure you check in on time."

"Check," snapped Chuck.

"Chuck," repeated Check, "good luck!"

Chuck, beginning to feel dazed again, uttered a thanks, hoping Check would not say Chuck again.

As Chuck was leaving the room, Check called out, "Chuck!"

Chuck wheeled with his blaster drawn. There was something about this Check that made him edgy.

"Holster that, Clarkson. I just wanted to say: You're welcome."

## PART III

At 4:30 that afternoon, Chuck was deposited at the main Space Port with last minute advice and encouragement from his superiors. A partner in the venture to find Dr. Reed had been assigned, Space Ace Rod Fren, a highly touted new super-sleuth. He was to work in complete co-ordination with Chuck on Sfonyx. (Heaven knows Chuck could use a little help when it comes to co-ordination.)

The two were to blend into Sfonyxian life as well as possible, and steal into the jungles to find Dr. Reed. But before Chuck would accept this man he had never before met as a partner in peril, he had one test to perform. On the way out to the Astro-Drive Tlercta Cruiser, Chuck threw his arm around Fren in a seeming gesture of comraderie. Chuck usually wasn't soft on other men, and the move was a strange one. But not without purpose. As they neared the boarding ramp, Chuck tightened his grip and brought his free hand palm against the man's forehead. He rubbed there with firm pressure, causing Fren to become a little perplexed.

"Chuck, uhh, what's happening?" Fren uttered with great patience.

"Well, since you pa[illegible] the test, I don't mind explaning. I just wanted to see if your skull was thick enough for you to be a successful Space Ace," Chuck said, laying in a little humor.

Fren didn't laugh, so Chuck continued undaunted. "No, in all seriousness, I was checking for an energy pad on you, the sign of Chemor's henchmen."

"Float a little cool there, Chuck. Whitfield and Fletcher assigned me; do you hold them suspect, too?"

"Of course not, but an imposter could have replaced you."

"Come now, Chuck, take a look at me. Could someone duplicate this body?" Fren opposed.

"Well, just wanted to see how 'Frenly' you really were," Chuck chukled. Fren didn't, so Chuck added "It's great to be able to laugh a bit, even under extreme tension."

Fren, an old-looking man with a hunched-back and a warty nose fairly resembling a Neptunian pickle, took it all in stride. But he did give a quizzical stare towards Chuck as the latter preceded him into the seating aisle of the Tlercta cruiser.

As he sat down next to Chuck, Clarkson patted him on the hump. "For good luck," remarked Chuck.

"I understand," replied Fren. "You know, this is just a disguise that the space technos put on me for my mission on Chaney-6. They couldn't get it off afterwards without removing my normal nose and back. Don't let them get their hands on you if you can help it, Chuck."

"Check," said Chuck, biting his lip.

Take-off came quickly after seating, and soon they were traveling indeed several thousand times the speed of light, weeding through and beyond the commonly traveled space routes. Fren dropped off into a nap, and Chuck went thru his pockets, finally secure that Fren was A.O.K. After all, that hump could have been an explosive charge wired to a detonator in Fren's pocket somewhere.

For the rest of the while Chuck read some material he had brought with him. Only once did he leave Fren, to go to the front guidance chamber and visit with the crew a bit. He assayed the crew as straight and loyal men, harboring no ill for him or Fren. No energy pads, and they submitted willingly to his forehead rubbing. They almost seemed to like it, and Chuck could tell they were a close-knit crew.

The stars were a humbled sight, whizzing past the front visors at a furious pace. Mere white streaks were they, and the speed was a gift of science to be admired, even tho it made Chuck dizzy to watch.

Fren came awake just as the Tlercta crusier was approaching a landing in Sfonyxopolis. Coming into the anti-gravity channel, their speed was slowed and a set-down accomplished with nary a jolt of the occupants.

Chuck and Fren stepped onto the brilliant pink surface of the landing pad and viewed the city thrust up about them. Then quickly they made their way into the debarkation building for check out. Soon they were having coffee and cream cheese pie, Chuck's favorite sweet, in the aire-dome room, high above the ground.

Fren had some revelations to make. "You know, Chuck, there isn't even a division Headquarters of the FPP on Sphonyx. It's a loose city with few ties to the customs or laws of the rest of the cosmos. I've a hunch our stay here will teach us a lot about dealing with surprise."

"That's quite a humh you have there," Chuck reacted. "Let's see.....

"You call this slop coffee?" yelled Fren suddenly.

"Yeah, what of it!" snarled the waiter, a man built like some Neanderthal.

"Good cofee," remarked Fren, winking, blinking and nodding. Mostly nodding.

"You see, Chuck," he went on in a hushed tone. "No respect for us here. Any other recognized planet and we'ed have people fawning all over us if we complained. Looks like we're up against more than the problem of finding Reed here; we're up against an unruly public as well."

"Yes, sheer ignorance!" lamented Chuck, draw

ing attention to himself. He said it loudly.

"And dont forget that varmint Chemor! He might yet add his interference to the brew."

"Critter, Chuck? What strange jargon is that," quizzed Fren.

"Oh, nothing, just something I picked up on the space liner out here. Read a few cowboy novels to soothe my temperament. Highly interesting stuff, about the history of early America. Then power spoke, and the law took second place.

You know, speaking of Chemor; I think I might've smelled a faint aroma of dirty socks on the space liner. Chemor's trademark if he used a matter transporter to steal onto the cruiser with us, then using invisibility as a shield.

I was just at the point where Jesse James, an infamous cowboy villain had been shot in the back while raping three Indian squaws at once-- I remember it well. Very faint, but definetely dirty socks.

Fren made a gesture of innocence; if he wasn't to blame it could very well have been Chemor.

"If Chemor's here now, I have an idea that might root him out within the hour. I can almost feel the way that polecat thinks, and I'm ready to surprise him out of hiding right now. I'm onto him, Fren."

"I'm beginning to think you ARE on something, Chuck," Fren put in.

"Sarcasm can ruin the best piece of cheese pie," replied Chuck.

"Well, on with it. I'm in it with you whatever the outcome.

With that, the two gulped the last of their cheese pie, swizzled some last swallows of coffee, and departed. At second runway level they boarded a priva-cab and jetted to where Chuck's huch lay. Needless to say, Fren's lay on his back.

On the way, the two inveterate crime-spoilers checked out all possible sniping points, surveying the needle-towered Sfonyxian buildings with more than a tourist interest. Soon they were safely at Sfonyx's greatest hotel.

Chuck tried to gain access to the building's underground storage vaults with some commanding talk and flashing his Space Ace credentials. He was here to look at the building's garbage, he asserted.

He ended up bribing his way in, when due process didn't impress the Sfonyxian hotel people. Before long, Chuck was elbow deep in the debris deposited in the garbage bins. Jet chutes from each apartment dumped their contents here into individual crucibles. An ill-timed deluge caught Chuck right in the face more than once, but with herculean resolve he dove again and again into the trash.

Soon Chuck smiled big and held up some electrical components fished from a reeking pile of food scraps. His eager fingers recovered even more from the same refuse----- an odd piece of fish spine, a piezo-electric crystal, leads of wire, a shoe-enlarging device, a map of Sfonyxopolis with all the public parks outlined, and a picture of Frank Frazetta with Helmut Mueller and Bob Barett. The master of fantasy illustration of 20th century Earth and his two biggest fans of the day.

The signs of Chemor reflected in his garbage!

With a jubilant look on his face, Chuck pulled Fren along towards the elevation tubes, where they boarded and shot up to the 127th floor. From there the suspect garbage tube had originated. Foregoing formalities, Chuck placed his full weight against the door of Suite B, his objective. The door was unlocked.

In Chuck tumbled, blaster drawn. He always liked shooting from the prone position, anyways----- it was so familiar to him. But naught could Chuck shoot at except billowing clouds that filled the room. Poisonous vapors, in all probability. The place had been booby-trapped, and Chuck was the booby!

"Down, Fren----- back to the tubes and get out. If I don't make it, find Reed and dedicate the case to me!" yelled Chuck heroicly, thinking of Fren's safety before his own. Fren had already left, however.

He had to stop yelling then, as his throat was assailed by the gas, a putrid smelling stuff it was. But not at all deadly, because Chuck refused to die. Just as well he die, tho, because now he couldn't see. And Chemor would undpubtedly have a mask on, with a beamer set to end Chuck's brilliant carreer.

A small squeaky voice penetrated Chuck as he rubbed his eyes, desperately trying to regain his vision. Funny thing tho, Chuck started gigling uncontrolledly.

"Hey, what are you doing in here, you big spoiler," came the cry.

"What manner of beast are you, Chemor? You taunt me with nonsense talk before doing me in," Chuck retorted, now laughing most out-of-pace with the situation.

"Are you some refugee from the whacko clinics?" came the reply. Now the gasses diffused, Chuck could see dimly again; the voice was that of a small boy, standing in the room with a gas-mask on.

"You ruined my experiment, buster!"

"Experiment? Buster?" uttered Chuck, now gaining his feet and checking out all avenues of sight through his bleary eyes. "Are you daft, small boy? Get out of here before Chemor takes you too; a criminal has no sympathy for children!" guffawed Chuck.

"Criminal? Chemor?" countered the tyke. "You busted into my house just when I was giving my pet lizards laughing gas. Did you ever hear a lizard laugh, mister?

Well, here I got a nut laughing instead. My nurse will take care of you.... Marta! Marta!"

"Yes, Egor," came a muscular feminine voice from a few rooms away. "What is it? Alright, I'll have to come and see what mischief you're doing now."

Chuck's mind was reeling, his vision still not 100%, and he was chuckling all the while. "But what about your garbage; you should be Chemor! And chemistry experiments by children, even the keeping of reptiles as pets is outlawed. You must be Chemor cleverly disguised as a little boy!" Chuck chuckled.

"Ooooh, are you gonna get it. I done nothin' illegal in Sfonyxopolis.....Marta, Marta!"

Chuck now heard the other person approaching at a run. Certainly she would not be imaginary, and how could he fight a woman, especially a muscular woman. He was laughing so hard he had dropped his gun, anyway. Clearly Chuck had make a slight mistake, tho the theory had been brilliant. Chuck decided retreat was in order ----- he had to admit he was probably wrong. And the little boy had scooped up some mean looking darts from a pile of toys, intent on pincushioning his guest. He really was a little boy!

In a wink, Chuck followed Fren down the tubes, not staying to make the acquaintance of Marta. He was drying his cheeks on his long sleeve tnic, still bubbling with giggles as he approached Fren on the street.

"What do you make of it? That apparently wasn't Chemor up there, nor was it poisonous gas. Some rascal kid playing with laughing gas, of all things. What kind of planet is this?"

Chuck's last remark brought a new person into the conversation.

"Tourists? Do I understand right that you two are new to Sfonyxopolis, boys?"

Chuck eyed the man with understandable suspicion, a squat smiling little fellow in an unkempt tunic. Only the printer's assistants on Terra looked that dirty and got away with it. Yes, he had all the appearance of a rogue.

"Well, I'm appointin' myself your personal

guide around Sfonxopolis! I've got the day off anyhows for the ceremony later..... yeah, and I'll even escort you to see the Omnipotent One do his stuff a little later. No show like it in the Universe, I say.

Standish is the name, boys."

With that Chuck found himself grasped by the arm and tugged along down the bustling avenue. He gave a searching look at Fren, who smiled and shrugged his stooped shoulders. Fren yelled to Chuck," Go ahead and size up the city a bit. I'll see you later and I'll register right in the hotel here. Just ask for Ty Benner's room to find me."

"S'matter, your buddy not interested in the sights," queried Standish as they came to an intersection. "Maybe tired from the trip out here, huh?"

"Yes, that must be the reason," said Chuck, still uncertain about whether he wanted the hospitality that had been extended. But Chuck had always felt safe in broad daylight and passed any concern for his own safety out of his head. He did want to see about a trusty Sfonyxian guide into the jungle regions, and perhaps this citizen could be of good help in that regard.

"Over there's the largest Brewpoint in Sfonxopolis," started Standish as they waited for the chance to cross."

"Brewpoint? You mean that intoxicating beverages are allowed in your city?" Chuck returned.

"Sure, they push out 20,000 gallons of Bubblebrew and Cosmic Crutch a day, y'know. And that just barely fills the demand. I drink my share of the 20,000, by the way. Could be the best available; nice and light and giddy, not like the rotgut brands, Devil Juice and Happy Hours. Don't touch 'em, if you're smart. Especially since you're not used to the stuff, being from the outside n all.

"You came here to get in on the fun, didn't you? Thas why most everyone ports in from the outside -- to enjoy themselves like nowhere else in the cosmos."

"Why, yes, I'm here for the pleasure of it. Can't you tell by my FPP uniform," Chuck snapped, trying to set the man in his rightful place.

"Yeah, I suppose you straight types need release more than an average guy at that. Din' even notice your funny suit till now." was the manner of reply Chuck drew from the Sfonyxian. Not proper at all.

"Well, let's cross, but step lively there what's your name..."

"Chuck, Chuck Clarkson," was all our adventurer could blurt, as Standish was hot legging it across the large intersection in a broken gallop. Chuck watched amazed as the autocars sped up as if trying to hit Standish, the pudgy man doing all the dodging to avoid collision. Chuck started across and had to maneuver with all his speed and skill to avoid two or three land-cruisers himself. Almost across the roadway, he got clipped and jolted from behind, spilling him onto the ped walk headfirst.

Instantly Chuck reacted to the motorized assault, as he wheeled in a sitting position and ripped out his hand blaster. He started a bead on the receding motor cruiser as Standish dashed up, knocking his arm down most unceremoniously.

"Chuck, hold up. You can't take the law into your own hands. Man, that driver was in the right, you know!"

"In the right!"

"Yes, that's how we keep down the senility on Sfonyx. It's a countryland for young fun-loving people, and everyone realizes that. Drivers are in the right if they cut down anyone who can't make it across the street with their own faculties.

Eh, we have old people's homes and hospitals for the disabled, but if you're on the street, you take your chances along with the crowds. Surprising to you?" Standish asked as he helped up the space ace and brushed his pant's seat off.

Chuck could only manage one word as an answer, "Incredible!"

For the next few hours he was whisked around the bustling city by Standish, who had more difficulty than most in crossing the streets and openly confessed that his chips might be cashed in any time now, but while he still could, he'd enjoy the open exciting Sfonyxian street life with his brother Sfonyxians.

During the tour Chuck gazed in awe at the sprawling drinking joints, not found in any other city to his knowledge, where the Sfonyxians made open sport of losing their mental equilibrium via the bottle. Chuck had one big question to ask Standish.

"How do you manage to break Galactic rules of conduct like this? This city is like a mantal asylum."

"Oh, sim-ple, Chuck. You see , we are not subject to Federated Planets meddling here. Nope, we're immune due to our wonder metal, Tellurium. We're the only planet exporting it, this the only planet it's found on. And the first colonists, who found the ore deep in the bowels of a water shaft that was sunk, numbered scientists amongst their lot. And the scientists merely built sabotage mechanisms into the only mine to assure their complete control over the discovery. They wanted and got wealth from the Tellurium, and freedom to do as they pleased because of it.

Great set-up, eh?"

"Incredible," muttered Chuck again. Now, each time they came to a street crossing, Chuck got more uneasy. He was not used to the dodge-em antics the Sfonyxians considered commonfare. And he was about to take leave of Standish, to jet back to Fren with his observations of the wild open city life they were surrounded by.

But Standish begged him off, "Man, stay with me at least till you see the Omnipotent One do his act. I like you Chuck; you're different. And I want you to see this one last sight before turning in tonight."

So, he acquiesced, admitting to himself that all the posters and placards he'd seen about this public hero interested him. Yes, Chuck decided upon one last go to the big religious ceremony that afternoon, then down to the business at hand, come morning. He certainly could not be jolted any more by those goings on than he already was by the gambling spots, the drinking joints, the pedestrian picking, or the complete lack of status recognition that existed on every hand in Sfonxopolis.

Standish gingerly led him to a large open area in the center of the city. It was beautifully laid out with growing trees of all kinds, lush vegetation and flowering plants. And in the middle of the great park was a cluster of stylish stone buildings, with a gigantic open stone concourse thronged with Sfonyxians, more arriving in droves all the while.

Amplified words drifted over the crowd, perking their enthusiastic attention:

"Huzzah, huzzah, oolahbah, ting-tang, wallah, wallah, bing bang!"

"Boy, he's really hot today, friend Chuck. We're in for a good ceremony."

"Ceremony? This guy talking through the speakers sounds like a Neptunian nut-bird, citizen Standish. What's he want to accomplish with all this babble?"

"Please, friend Chuck..... I do not mock your customs. Do not mock ours; do not mock our most beloved Wizard. He always thrills us with his astounding feats of skill. And his words bring meaning to our lives. You know what I mean, buddy boy?"

Well, granted, Chuck was curious about the behavior of Sfonyxians, and this seemed to be a focal point of their lives, so he watched on despite a growing aggravation with the un-

civilized behavior of the people.

Now the crowds waxed larger. Every nook and cranny of the outdoor arena was filled with eager faced citizens. The air was thick with their shouts, for their human God to come forth. In the background fast and fantastic music could be heard, coming from large loudspeakers positioned in the center of the stone palace ground. And above the central ring of great loudspeakers a great purple-clothed pedastal stood. It boasted a huge multi-colored divan fixed with many swan-necked microphones. That must be where the old religious fanatic would make his appearance before the rabble, Chuck thought. And to think, religion had been obsolete for centuries in the civilized galaxy.. what a throwback culture this was! A mystic preposter their all-high public figure!

"Friend Chuck, how bout a swig?" asked the funny fellow Standish. He had pulled a can of some noxious beverage, "Cosmic Crutch" by name, from his tunic and was splashing it down his throat in big gulping draws. "I always like to see the Most Potent One when I'm high. Adds to th' enjoyment, y'know."

"Thank you, but I do not partake of such weaknesses," came Chuck's appropriate reply. "I want to be alert when somebody tries to mob me; and FPP agent out in the open is always subject to great adoration, Standish."

"OK big fella..... Whoops!" The man fell to his knees under the impact of the booze, now, and Chuck had to help him up. As he did, he noticed that throughout the hordes people were gulping from similar flasks, lurching about most uncontrolledly as a result. This was truly a potential chaos to try the skill of a public defender such as Chuck. After all, it always boiled down to defending the public from itself, thought Chuck.

Standish continued to swizzle his brew, finding it harder and harder to stand. So Chuck found himself propping the rubber-legged fellow by the elbow before long. Many of the crowd lay flat on their axes, which they carried on Sfonyx for self-defense.

Now the music was getting more pitched, and the gay festive sort had changed to a furious staccato beat. Colored puffs of smoke rose from the speakers and engulfed the pedastal, obscuring it's couch from view. The throngs reacted to this as a signal, and chanted, "Wondered Wazir, Fabled Fakir, now appear!" over and over till Chuck's head throbbed with the din.

There was a very raucous cascade of noise from the speakers, and the shammish colored smoke started to dissipate. Someone was now on the divan. And as the last of the smoke was carried away by sudden gusts of wind, clearly a figure stood out, mounted their above the masses. Dressed in a flowing robe, pointed star-spangled cap on his head, he stood up to bow all around to the masses.

Unmistakable, it was Chemor!

The people pressed forward, cheering, clapping, raising their right hands in a salutory gesture. They flocked forward to greet their beloved figure..... Chemor!

Chuck , honestly speaking, was flabbergasted. Here was the mis creant sworn to stop Chuck's mercy mission on Sfonyx, and he was adored and deified by the masses here. A God amongst luny men. Yes, Chuck was set aback, but more than this, his analytical mind knew instinctively that this was not a healthy scene for him to be part of. He could only buck the delerious rabble gathered around Chemor over his own dead body! And that's not the way he would have liked it, for if he were to strike Chemor down now, or leap to capture him, the public reation would be planetary rabies. And even Chuck could not take it upon himself to produce planetary rabies in the name of the FPP.

"That stinkard," Chuck muttered, stunned, as he took leave of Standish and beaded for the exits. Meanwhile, the "Wazir" had bowed and was ripping right into the main attraction.

"Today, good people of Sfonyx, you shall witness a famous ritual performed through the ages of all men. Today your omnipotent leader will offer to delight you..... a human sacrifice!"

Dancing and cheers followed this pronouncement, and the music picked up to bugaloo fervor.

"And, good people, that sacrifice will show you without a doubt in your minds that the universe and all the powers in it pay due homage to your crucial planet, the ever-glorious Sfonyx!"

"Yahoo, yahoo," shrieked the jubilant crowd."

"Standish shouted to Chuck, "I knew the Wazir had something special good up his sleeve. But this, wow! We've never seen a human sacrifice before."

"Hey, where are you goin' buddy boy," Standish yelled, then he sunk down below the crowd, clearly drunk off his feet.

Chemor's amplified tones rose high: "Among you is an outsider in strange garb. Bring him to me. He is the one picked by your omniscient Wazir, picked for eternal honor in Sfonyxian texts. His name shall pass on forever through the generations yet to come to Sfonyx. He shall be the one named through all time as he, from the inner universe, who gave himself gladly as tribute to our children, and our childrens' children. Bring to me Chuck Clarkson, patriots of Sfonyx."

Here a great cheer went up from the crowd. Adoring, hungry arms embraced the still-struck spaceman. Tears flowed from the eyes of those who bore him on their shoulders through the hysterical throngs, which parted as the Great Sea had once for a bygone religious martyr. Sfonyxians clutched at his feet, arms, and legs as he passed, kissing any part of his anatomy they could manage to plant moist lips on. This was their finest hour.

Flowers and bits of jelly beans, the Sfonyxian National Fruit, were draped on him as stairs were negotiated up, up to the pedastal. There he was deposited, wrapped in the rummage from the masses, on Chemor's divan. A hundred thousand at least, the Sfonyxians, frenetic men, women, and children alike, passed close to the central podium, cheering at the mad sport. Even the kids were gifted quaffs from the ubiqitous ale-cans of the crowd, to add to the high happiness of the moment.

A human sacrifice!

Chuck Clarkson!

Chemor spoke again into the mikes: " Death by fire is decreed; the smoke of his sacrifice shall rise up into the heavens. Long live the MEMORY of Chuck Clarkson!"

The throngs immediately picked up the chant: "Long live the memory. Long live the memory."

Our hapless hero snapped his head about in all directions, seeing the crowds thick and furious as far as the eye could tell. No exit. Huis Clois!

The crowd beat each other on the backs and heads in delerium, and much was passed between them, "He's a lucky man to achieve such fame. How I wish it were me." So said some (but not without falsetto to their tone.) At any rate, pandemonium broke loose everywhere but on the pedastal, where Cheror's be-robed henchmen methodically readied Chuck's deathbed. The deathbed" a shining alloy bench which, with a mechanical whir, had come rising up right next to the ceremonial couch. A blanket of blossoms was laid atop it, followed by Chuck.

"Death by fire," Chemor had decreed. A typically nutty event on this planet of instability, and Chuck was the prize nut now, a pecan ready for the roasting.

Chemor made mystical gestures over Chuck's prone form. The space ace lay very still, perhaps resoved to his fate, perhaps now verily frozen in the realization there was no escape.

The coolness of the metal was an ironic sensation to Chuck as the torch rays were wheeled close in, reddy to ignite with a blast of white heat. As Chemor bent close to Chuck, his boice was low. Only our hero heard these words: "I warned you Clarkson; now I must carry out my threat. If there is a creator, plan now to meet him."

Chuck looked directly into Chemor's face. The twinkling of beads of sweat shone from his sinewy cheeks. "I still feel only sorrow for you, Chemor. You are obviously very insane to perpetrate this act of murder on an FPP agent in front of a hundred thousand people. FPP will break this planet wide open over this. Many of your little nuts out there will suffer."

"But, no, Clarkson. For the universe needs Tellurium, therefore the universe needs Sfonyx as a friend. And I am adored here -- no ill can befall me. The plan is perfect. Now, the masses wax wild; it's time you were going."

With this the mongrel god strode ceremoniously to his podium. Both his arms extended and rose to above his head. Now the masses grew still of a sudden, two hundred thousand eyes upon their Wizard's arms.

Down plunged the arms to a master control board in front of the assassin-priest, and the licking flames spat forth, played over the full length of Chuck's body. The flames grew quickly fiercer, and Chuck glowed like some incandescent effigy, never moving, face upward, enveloped by flame.

Chuck's eyes closed slowly, relievedly. His one finger never left the presso-pad on his thigh. The freeze system of his indestructo-suit held, despite the smoldering heat of his deathbed. Let loose all the Fahrenheit fury of a Tellurium smelter, and I'll still lay here smiling pretty as you please, Chuck thought.

A sub-priest of Chemor's cult who had arrived late to the undertakings made his way up to the altar and edged close to the spectacle of fire. His face could not be seen beneath the Paisley-cloth hood of his striped robe. (Chemor and his servants were all sharp dressers.) It seemed as if this late-joiner wanted to catch up on all he'd missed as he bent so close to Chuck's fiery form that one could almost hear his whiskers crackle.

The crowd grew more silent by degrees. For this outlandish Chuck Clarkson apparently would not burn! This obstinateingrate did not want to go down in Sfonyx's history books.

Chemor saw and comprehended the nature of Chuck's resistence. So another ingredient need be added to his recipe of death, eh? Chemor replied by issuing forth new hand waves, muttering new incantations, and jamming home another lever. The brother of fire, electricity, was called up from the generators where it lived beneath the podium. Millions of volts of crackling death lept to charge through Chuck's deathbed.

Even as Chemor threw the electrical lever, that curious, tardy priest we pointed out to you before did something very peculiar. He threw out his hand and something thin and snaky flew through the air and fell across Chuck just before the voltage got to him. Those closest to the podium, namely the ring of sub-priests on top of the scene, could see that it was a strand of Tellurium, that near-unmeltable super-conducting wonder metal found only on Sfonyx. And they couldn't buy the time to pass this observation on.

For as the electrical current flowed deadly, Chuck slumped and his body went lax. Even more, a half dozen of Chemor's sub-priests fell dead all around the altar.

Tumult captured the crowd now as they stormed the podium like mad children/ Such a gorgeous panarama of sacrifice had never been seen heretofore. Now Chemor quickly vanished through the floor to the obscure safety of the underground temple from whence he had come.

And the mysterious priest who had thrown the Tellurium wire at the height of the pageant (unbeknownst to the crowd) turned off the flames and hoisted Chuck's body to his shoulders. The crowd parted miraculously to pass Chuck's body in death as they had in life. And his body did pass -- right up into the air as the priest, Chuck's body over his shoulders, flew away towards downtown Sfonyxopolis.

## PART III

For Chuck Clarkson, returning to consciousness was again a cavalcade of twilight remembrances and blurred half-thoughts. (Kind of like being conscious, if you're Chuck.) But anyhow, Fren noticed him stirring and opened with, "You didn't know I had minister's blood in me, did you, Chuck?"

Fren sat next to his bed with a Western novel Chuck had read on the flight, titled, Some Die Twice.

"Hey, y'know, these wild West novels are good, Fren went on.

"Wild West, minister blood? Wha' hoppen?" came Chuck's baby blue reply.

"Why your side kick only rescued you from the mouth of an early grave, impersonating as a man of the cloth, Chuck. I threw a Telluium wire over you that drained all Chemor's amperage into a bunch of his sub-priests. Were they surprised! Knocked 'em dead, so to speak."

"Then I jetted away with you courtesy of a rocket belt under my robes. Left the crowd in an uproar, no less."

"So you were that obnoxious priest who bent all over me back there. God, and I wanted to blast you -- had a strong impulse to due to the way I felt over the whole situation. But it would have been a senseless killing, so I held back. Thanx, Fren. You're learning fast, and I must confess, I needed aid at the time. My electro-insulation couldn't have held back the jolt, I fear. I was knocked out even tho you drained away the greater share of it!"

"You know,this planet is nuts. They knew I was an FPP super-agent and they didn't care a bit. They wanted my smoke for their history books."

"Yeah, Chuck. What say we head for the uncharted bush right away."

"I think you're in the right, Fren. I'd rather trust the primitive savages out in the jungles than have one of the civilized goon squad as a guide.

"Uhh, yeah, Chuck," said Fren, putting down the wild West novel.

Next stop, the wild West jungles of Sfonyx!

## PART IV

A few hors later found the two inveterate crime-fighters tracking through the alien sward of Sfonyx. Here they were, tho it had been no easy feat to get there. Upon leaving the hotel, there had been an ugly crowd of informed Sfonyxians all around the building, waiting for the man who had robbed them of making history. They had deluged Chuck and Fren with garbage and foul oaths, and the drivers on the streets were particularly eager to nail Chuck at every corner, one charging onto the ped-walk and putting his vehicle into a babywear store trying to smash our hero. Only a shout and shove from Fren had saved him.

Quickly they had left Sfoyxopolis by rocket belt, armed only with their carried weapons and gadgets, and a manual of edibles in the Sfonyxian back country thoughtfully provided them by the FPP Central Planning Facility. It seemed that this was the only item that the FPP had given them fit for dealing with life on Sfonyx, vegetable life!

But their adventures were not to be

loss hazardous or unexpected, it turned out. For, before two hours were up, Fren was taken by a Sfonyxian lizard-mole and carried off to its nearby burrow in the ground.

Fren had been behind Chuck, and by the time the Ace of Space realized Fren had been overpowered and whisked away, it was too late. All Chuck could do was risk one shot at the beast, as it turned to glower defiantly at him, and it had been a miss. Then Fren and the creature were gone, disappeared into the labyrinth of subterranean tunnels the beast knew as home. Following the beast down into the earth could be futile and was too dangerous to the outcome of the mission, so Chuck sadly carried on, sorrowed by the loss of good old Fren. A Space Ace's fundamental rule, "Mission first, sidekicks second," had to take precedence. Chuck had to remind himself solidly.

The jungles were choked with gigantic plants and vines of all descriptions, and gay blossoms were an ironical feature to Chuck in his gloom and loneness against the Unknown. Soon he had the chance to cope with a familiar asversary, however. A human foe.

For as he rounded a bend of the winding jungle trail he was following, a party of natives came into view. And they were speaking to each other.-- Just what Chuck had wanted, to meet with an intelligent group of natives and convey to them that he wanted to be taken to their great white father, Dr. Reed.

"Hello, there," Chuck sounded as he saw the group. He realized that they couldn't understand, but it was a start at communications.

Curiously enough, one of them approached at his call. Chuck stood fast, giving the universal hand signal of peaceful intentions, the left middle finger extended, the others closed into a fist.

And the native said, "What do you want?" in gutteral English!

"Ahh, you speak my tongue!" Chuck said, enthused. "You know Dr. Reed?"

"Dr. Reed, Dr. Reed," the bold native shouted. And they all began to dance about most gayly at this chant, holding up their sound arms, shaking their sound legs in testimony to the man. It seemed they had been recipient of his curative skills in waging the fight against limb-limbo. Sadly, thought Chuck, they could not know that Chemor, Reed's sworn enemy, ruled the civilized portion of this planet, and who knows what had become of Reed after curing these children of the bush?

Chuck was just thinking these thoughts when a white-headed old man came into the clearing, walked through the dancing natives, and towards our hero. Clearly, he was an Earthman, and as he walked, the natives prostrated themselves, still chanting, "Dr. Reed, Dr. Reed." Could this be.....

"I'm Dr. Reed," the man said without formality.

"This is too good to be true," exclaimed Chuck. "I'm Chuck Clarkson of the Federated Planetary Patrol, sir." Chuck extended his hand to shake with the advancing old genius.

"Yes, I know quite well who you are," replied Reed. And he shot from the hip, a well-aimed blast at that. It caught Chuck full on the forehead and sent him crashing into a large tree, fully out of commission. Reed gestured to the natives to come and bear away the silent form of Chuck.

## PART V

"Drink some of this, my dear sir."

Reed offered a golden brown, viscous fluid to Chuck's lips and poured a swelling stream down the Space Ace's gullet.

"Say, that's real good," remarked Chuck, feeling the fuzz dissolve in his brain for the first time in years.

"But, why did you stun me out there?" he snapped, realizing in a flash what had occurred.

"I know, and I'm sorry. But I couldn't deal with you in any other way, I'm afraid. Now I'll have a heart to heart talk with you and hope you see my reasons for acting as I did. First, how do you feel now, Chuck?

"My head feels light, very light. That was a mean stun you gave me out there. Lucky that I can absorb most any blow to my head. No, don't feel bad at all. Now, go on...."

"Well, you see over there a robe and a pointed hat. Does that recall anything to your mind, Chuck?"

"Chemor's clothes! Has he been out here trying to get at you?"

"Not exactly, Chuck; for you see, I am Chemor!"

He paused here, letting the last statement work some effect on Chuck. The Space Ace was obviously dumb struck, and now he was somewhat speechless, too.

So Reed continued, "Yes, I must say, I am Chemor, and I'm also Dr. Reed. You are the only person alive to know the truth of that, and the implications. My jungle children don't realize anything of the sort. They are rather simple, you see. In my identity of Chemor, I am religious epitome of this planet. As Dr. Reed I live joyful days out here with the jungle folk, my children.

"But I must explain further. I must justify my actions in each identity to you. As Dr. Reed, I was a famous and brilliant scientist. And in that role, according to civilized systems, I was not allowed to marry, to squander my valuabel time in personal ways. And I had access to much scientific knowledge of the highest order, but I could only use this knowledge and ability to work on government sanctioned projects.

"I got assignment here to Sfonyx to use my medical skills on these suffering people, and there started a new life for me. For on this planet I saw potential, potential for a whole new identity to arise as a beloved figure to the people of Sfonyxopolis. There rose Chemor, my alter-ego to the city dwellers.

"For I found here a new feeling, Chuck. Freedom. And the possibilities of it were intoxicating. I say to you Chuck, a man needs freedom to do as he sees fit in order to be at his best. And on Sfonyx, this renegade planet where people dare to break the mores of planetary conduct and simply have a good time there sprung up the person called Chemor, who lead them in their pursuit of fun and release from restrictions and rules. The universe is full of foolish rules!

"Chemor was a natural outgrowth of my confined creativity, and my lack of personal freedom. It was a simple thing for a man of my nature to devise delightful tricks to amuse the Sfonyxopolitans. And at the same time I found a simple, satisfying life amongst the sfonyxian natives.

"So, you see, I didn't want to be found by the established, ingumanely designed formal universe; I want to live out my ways right here, in my freely chosen double way.

"Tho I harbor no malice for anybody, I do for the life I left. And that extends to a feeling of malice against the agents of that former life, namely FPP agents trying to return me to the drudgery of a life without choice. So I was willing to go to any lengths, including your death, Chuck, to prevent my discovery. But now I may have reasoned upon another way, a more pleasant way.

"Here, please have a little more Godurple nectar for your head. You'll feel better quickly."

But what was this? Had Chuck's equilibrium been sufficiently upset by Chemor's stun blow, coupled with his amazing revelations, to commit an obvious violation of Space Ace Regulations? "The drinking of any

strange liquid on an alien sward being definetely forbidden!"

"Ahh, yes. (godurple, godurple) Hmm, it makes a right queer sound going down," Chuck said, upon gulping some more fluid offered by Dr. Reed.

"I find it very amusing myself, Chuck. It's a perfect drink, you know. Contains all vitamins, amino acids, and sugars man needs for perfect nutrtion. Quite a complete food, and delicious to the palate and mind. There are some hitherto undescribed narcotic moieties in it, too, you see."

"Narcotics! Then my purest of pure bodies has been corrupted!" Chuck realized, aloud. He tried to sit bolt upright in order to penetrate the wizardly old man in khakis with a searching stare; but instead he just found his elbow go out and he rolled leisurely around in the moist ferns for a bit. Chuck could feel the heavy nector swishing delightfully in his stomach. He knew, of course, it might be poisoned. But somehow, he didn't care.

And a wonderful warbling feeling was in his head, replacing the usual blurry feeling of clear thinking he had trained into him for years. He could hear and see perfectly, but the colors and sounds were more intense and beautifully harmonied than he'd ever noticed before.

"They ought to legalize this stuff," he heard himself saying in spite of himself. This kind of statement went against all the principles he had been imbedded with. But perhaps it was only the cannyness of a master sleuth speaking out. "Cajole the enemy, then bring him to justice"..... the seventh rule of interplanetary crime-stlpping.

Now a sinewy, buxom, pair-chested Brukto Native she brought a sort of pillow and sat down next to him, massaging his neck. The sounds she made as she bent near were like the mewing of little kittens and the cooing of little love birds. Not uncomely at all was she.

Chuck suddenly flashed, and in that mental scene he dreamed he saw a painting, one he'd seen in an old book he'd confiscated in a thought raid against a Pornography outlet on Censor VIII. The painting was by Maxfield Parrish, a master of realistic fantasy in the vulgar 1900's, and it had made an impression on his mind that was indeliable.

There was a marble veranda, with Roman pillars going up all around. And the background was an idyllic scene of trees, balsams and ferns full grown. The sunlight bounced off multi-hued mountains on the horizon. Billowy clouds swelled a majestic sky, warming the entire scene with reflected sun.

On the veranda there was a reclining girl, fair and blushing, in the fore. She was dressed in a pure white toga, a smile blossomed on her face. And standing beside her was a golden-haired boy, hands on knees, bending over -- a completely satisfied eunuch was he, naked and enraptured by his surroundings.

Chuck imagined himself as the eunuch, since he certainly wasn't effeminate.

These things flashed before his mind's eye as he breathed deeply of the sweet vegetation all around and felt his innards warm as the Sfonyxian sun high above.

The aroma of the Brukto girls sun-cured body made his eyelids flutter now, and she touched them to quiet him.

The feeling of her fingers upon his eyes warmed his mind throughout, and a slow sensation of carefree ease filled him, a sensation he had not felt before. Her long silky hair tumbled over his face, sending itchy prickles dancing around his body. And her lips, the succulent pale lips that held something over an earth girl's, her lips were strong and warm against his neck, over his face, around his mouth.

Suddenly Chuck didn't feel like a eunuch anymore!

"This is living, alright," sighed Chuck abruptly, not hearing himself say it.

"Ahh, I prayed that you would see things as I, Chuck."

But the tone of Reed's voice just then tugged at Chuck's trained reflexes. He knew deep within what he had to do, and by degrees as he lolled in the embrace of the Brukto beauty, his hand stole into his pocket. It came out with a Universal Repurifier Pill, his last desperate defense against chemical influences on his body and mind. He had to fight back the desire to fling it to the gentle winds, a lapse of responsibility he'd never felt before.

Then he popped it into his mouth before Dr. Reed could realize what he was doing behind the girls back.

Instantly the pill should work to negate the effects of any foreign drug upon his system. Now he'd be the keenly analytical marvel of old, ready to bring Reed in no matter what the barriers immediately. But perhaps the all-important pill had some flaw engineered into it by the master chemist who didn't really agree with what he was doing, the likes of Dr. Reed.

Swiftly now his hand stole into a secret sieve in his right boot, and he withdrew a small hand blaster capable of delivering a sizeable stun.

"Wou- Wou-, Would you ta-talk about leaving?" Reed stammered. But then, he had a lisp, whcih always makes it hard to talk when emotional.

Came Chuck's quick reply: "Leaving..... why, I just got here, didn't I?"

He tossed the hand-charger skidding across the luxuriant grass.

Then the Brukto she really got friendly.

Steve
Hickman

# THE GALLERY

*Nudes by*

steve hickman kenneth smith
berni wrightson mike kaluta

Steve
Hickman

Wrightson

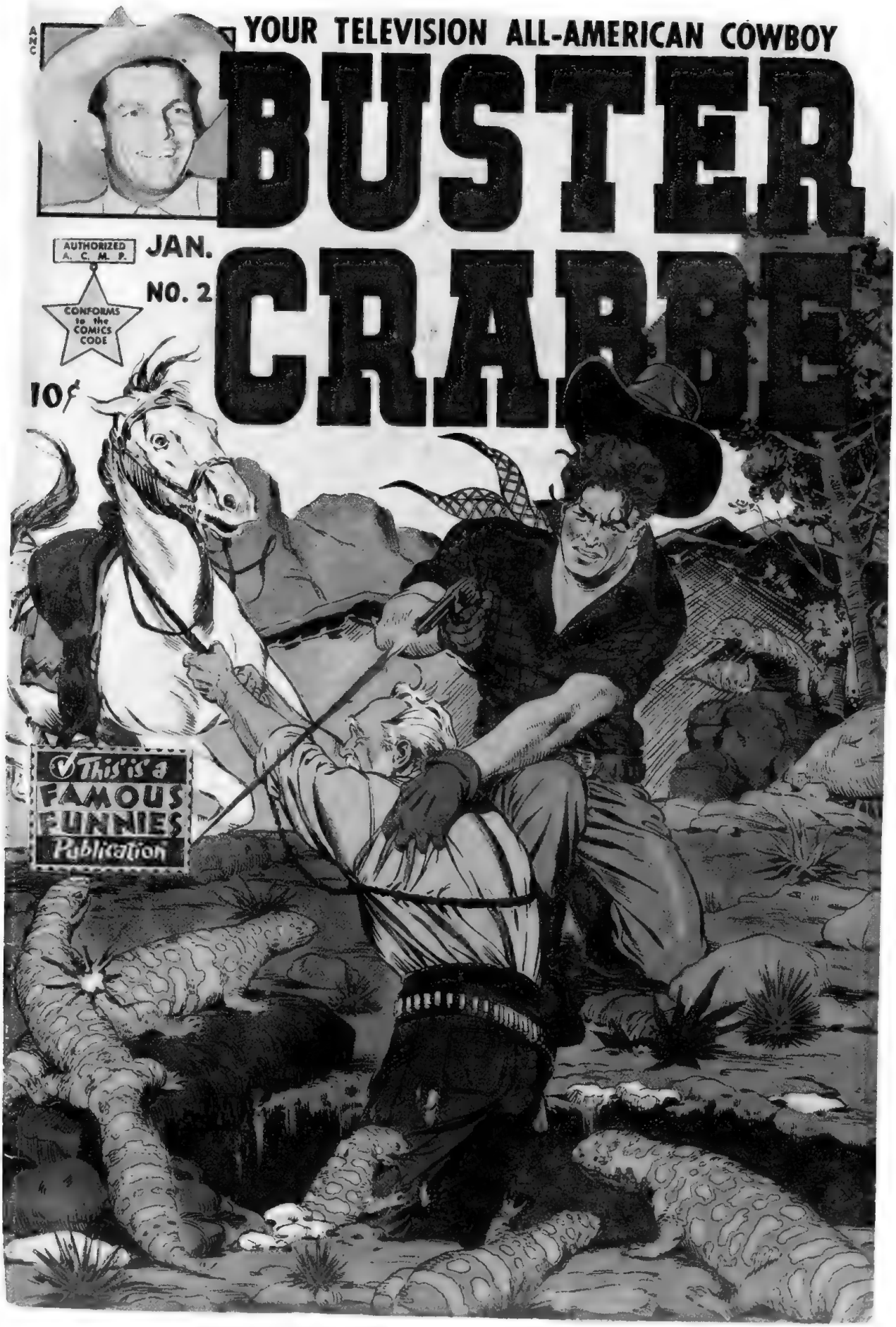
Hickman
68

Kenneth Smith
26 November 1968

Steve
Hickman

Steve
Hickman

Steve
Hickman '69


YOUR TELEVISION ALL-AMERICAN COWBOY
BUSTER CRABBE
AUTHORIZED A. C. M. P.
CONFORMS to the COMICS CODE
JAN.
NO. 2
10¢
This is a FAMOUS FUNNIES Publication

'68

BRUNNER '67

# BILL GAINES TALKS WITH THE FANIMALS

RICH: I borrowed this recorder from Jim Steranko to do the interview; it seems I brought a little Japanese make to his place to record a session with him, and it started stuttering on us (no reflection on Jim.) So I come to record an interview with you, Mr. Gaines, editor and publisher of the dearly departed EC's, using a tool supplied by a modern comic star.

BILL: I hope we make it! (Obviously a reaction to Hauser's windy, pointless lead-in. -Ed.)

RICH: Are you fond of reminiscing about the old EC's?

BILL: Oh, I love it. Those were the happiest days. We make a lot more money with MAD magazine, but I always had more fun with the comics. Probably the reason is that with MAD I'm about 90% business and 10% creative, but back with the comics I was about 95% creative and probably 5% business. Of course, it's a lot more fun to be creative.

RICH: Nowadays, it seems the editors of comics use a lot of control over their writers and artists. I know for instance that Jim Steranko just left Marvel Comics because he craved for more freedom with his fine writing and art. Changes always seemed to be demanded, causing him to fight to retain parts he thought very effective. Even after accepting the final version, they would change it at times, throwing Jim into a professional rage. The Comics Code Authority necessitates some changes, of course. Comics just can't be as strong as back in the EC heydays.
Did you exert a full measure of editorial influence over your writers and artists? Or did you sit back and let them do what THEY thought was their best work?

BILL: Well, you have to remember that Al and I wrote practically all of the material, so there was no problem with control over writers because we were the writers. We left the artists practically to their own devices, and I think that at least with that group of artists the results showed that it was the right thing to do. However, even we were rigid in our format, and I remember we used to have a lot of trouble with Bernie Krigstein, who would take the way Al had written a story and chop it all up and paste it back together his way. He came out with some delightful effects, and, as the years go by I have to admit that he was right and we wrong at times, but he practically drove us to distraction with the bits and pieces that he brought in, practically editing our story to make it fit the pictures. With the exception of Bernie, I don't think any of us had any trouble.
Bernie finally left us because he objected to doing a certain horror story we had given him. It was for the PICTO-FICTION's, a rewrite of something we'd done for the comics; I don't recall exactly what bothered him.

RICH: PICTO-FICTIONS: 'The Adult Illustrated'...

BILL: Hah..... 'The Adult Illustrated Magazines' of 1956, yes.
Krigstein left in the middle of that story, and Crandall, who's more philosophical about these things came in. He finished off Krigstein's unfinished story and that was that. So it makes a good collector's item, I guess. ("Fall Guy For Murder" in CRIME ILLUSTRATED # 1.)

RICH: Reed has been very generous to us, as an example the last cover for SPA FON.

BILL: Gee, I haven't seen Reed for..... oh, it must be ten years now. He was older than us, and he must be well into his fifty's by now.

RICH: He's a rather unique EC veteran because he had a long apprenticeship in comics before he came to EC. He did some beautiful work for the Quality Comics group back in the early '40's. A lot of the other artist only just burst upon the scene when they were working for EC.

BILL: Yes, Crandell was a big man in his field long before he came to work for us. Most of the other artists blossomed after coming to work for us.
Ingles had been around for a while before. He did a lot of things: westerns, love, and a whole lot that even I never knew about. I'm just starting to see some of his old work now, the point being that he was a pro and Crandall was a pro before they came here. But most of the other artists were relatively young and relatively untried before they hit us.

RICH: Do you feel a sense of personal pride when you look at the carreers of some of the artists you had, and see how far they've gone?

BILL: Oh yeah, like: "We knew them when....." Wally Wood and Jack Davis. Bill Elder with his "Little Annie Fanny."

RICH: (inevitable) And Frazetta?

BILL: Well, Frazetta never did that much for us. Not nearly as much as now I wish he had.
He was always tied up with other stuff, and we just didn't see that much of him. You know, we never really sought artists out. They sought us out-- like Crandall. He came walking in here one day; we'd never seen him before. He was a few years after the rest, and I think he just came in to join the fun. Frank he just hardly came in. I saw your checklist just the other day, and I was surprised he'd done as much for us as you said. I suppose you know what you're talking about; I haven't checked it out.

RICH: Well,we ferret our way around the comic world trying to find out what all of these artists worked on. A lot of times, you may not have realized that you paid artists for certain bits that they contributed. A few of them were close personal friends, as I'm sure you know.

BILL: Of course, especially Williamson and Krenkel. Well now we never had Krenkel do a job for us; he worked for us, but we dealt with Williamson. I don't recall Krenkel ever getting a by-line.

RICH: Once, in INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION 32, the story "Food for Thought."

BILL: Well, a lot of the boys did this. Wally Wood's early stuff felt the prescence of Joe Orlando. A guy by the name of Sid Check was kicking around for quite a while, and God knows how much he put into Wally's stuff. And Wally had a wife who could draw.
Of course, Wally has pride in his work nonetheless.

RICH: The thing I can't understand is that he has been credited as saying that he can barely stand to look at a lot of the work he did for the old EC's. And he feels his clean style today

is much more a true illustrative style. The work he did for EC was way too cluttered, according to him.

BILL: Well, it was cluttered, no question about it; and we recognized it. Wally didn't do a heckuva lotta covers for us for that reason, if you'll notice. A cluttered cover is not a good-selling cover. It should be as simple and punchy as possible. Once we sold the magazine, we didn't care how much clutter was on the inside.

Graham Ingles' Covers never sold as well as Craig's and Davis', as much as I love Graham's work. We just ran them because we loved them. His work, brilliant as it was, was not very saleable. The HAUNT of FEAR's with his cover work never sold well.

RICH: But he seemed to be quite popular by the letters printed in the horror books.

BILL: Well, he got a lot of letters, but they don't reflect the sales. You know the story about science-fiction fandom and fanzines..... Probably the most vociferous group of fans in the world are the science-fiction fans, and many a publisher has gone to ruination because he believed his mail. I don't know how it is now; I've lost touch with the field. But in my day the leading science-fiction magazine, which was GALAXY, was selling under 100,000. At this level of sales I don't know how they made money; I don't know how they existed. And with all the fussing and fuming and shouting, there just weren't enough fans to support a magazine, which is why science-fiction rates were very low. The publishers probably couldn't afford to pay more. The market just wasn't there. I don't know how they're doing now, do you?

RICH: Well, there seem to be more on the market now than a few years back. But then there was a paradoxical flood of horror comics on the market back in the EC days just before the code, when things were rough for the publishers.

BILL: Before the CODE there were 700 horror titles on the stands.

RICH: Did your sales go down proportionally when the tremendous flood of titles came in?

BILL: Ours didn't, but remember that we only had ten well-known titles. The most we ever had was ten, which for a comic house is very small. And Kurtzman handled three of those. I didn't have anything to do with TWO-FISTED, FRONTLINE, or MAD. So, Al and I really only handled seven. And that was all we could handle. Martin Goodman (Marvel) put out 70 when he saw the success of our horror comics. So the quality couldn't have been there, simply because of the volume. That Stan Lee did as well as he did with 70 horror titles was a miracle.

RICH: It's very apparent that the EC imitators just didn't have the luster of EC, lacking editing, artwork, and story quality. Marvel is trying horror titles right now, by the way. They're putting out TOWER of SHADOWS and CHAMBER of DARKNESS. And of course, DC has constant horror titles, which are doing quite well in sales right now. There seems to be a whole new boom in horror at the present.

BILL: Well, of course, Joe Orlando is over there at National, and I can see his fine Italian hand in their success.

RICH: We were touching on Graham Ingles a moment ago, and that's a point of interest. He seems to be one of the most confused personal topics concerning the old EC group.

It so happens that he's one of the favorites of today's EC fans, the interest in EC being at a near-fever pitch throughout fandom. Ingles is one of the most sought after of the EC bunch; referring to his life -- it seems to be a tragic mess, though admittedly I don't have many facts to be sure of. Is he around now; I understand he's gone from the scene?

BILL: Well, he is a favorite.

Here in a nutshell is what I know about Ingles the person. He is or was an extremely nice man, but he was an alcoholic. Consequently, he'd go along fine and then he'd fall over the edge and disappear from sight -- he couldn't be found. So we'd just sweat it out and hope he'd show up in time for the deadline with the job. He generally did show up in time.

We quickly sized-up the situation and gave Ingles jobs with long, long deadlines. We'd give him a job due on a certain Tuesday, and it might really be needed two weeks from that Tuesday. One thing I'll say about him is that no matter what dreadful business he was involved in, and most of the time we didn't know, he never lost a job, and he never got a job dirty. His home was out in Long Island, and he'd be on his way in here but stop off somewhere for a quick one. And that was his downfall, as the quick one would turn into a very long one. He'd come in here four days later with his mind a complete blank. But, as I say, he never lost a job and he never got one dirty.

RICH: He seemed to make just about every horror issue, though. I know in HAUNT of FEAR he had a string of stories and covers that lasted for I don't know how long.

BILL: Ingles was in every horror book, and there were three horror books every two months. So there's six weeks that he appeared in horror.

Now, if he was on the ball, with the other two weeks he'd do a story for SHOCK. And if he wasn't on the ball, that means he messed up for two weeks. We'd try very hard to get him in all the horror books.

RICH: And now, nobody knows where he is?

BILL: As far as I know, he's missing. Everybody's dying to find him; it's like he's become a sudden hero. I do think there'd be a lot of work for him now if he'd pop up somewhere. There are a lot of good years left in him if he's still alive.

RICH: Would you reflect a bit on your favorites?

BILL: Oh, they were all my favorites, every one. I loved them all, even Kamen, who is everyone's unfavorite. (Chuckle as he sees my face wrinkle.)

RICH: He's not well received by devotees because he didn't have much range or flash.....

BILL: Well, Jack was hired originally for love comics which we never put out. We had put some out, but by the time we hired him the love comics had died.

By the way, the death of some of our earlier titles created some funny title changes and numbering systems. The reason is that when you publish a magazine, you want second class postal entry, because they send out your subscription copies at a lower postal rate. It must be applied for, and once it's granted, it's a valuable thing. A deposit has to be provided, and when a title was dropped and a new title started, it took the post office a while to return the first deposit. Meanwhile, a new sum had to be deposited for the second title. So, rather than put up a new deposit, we tried to change the title so the post office would allow us to go on. That's why GUNFIGHTER 14 turned into HAUNT of FEAR 15. Occasionally we'd get away with it, and sometimes not. Then, the post office would make us go back and start renumbering. That's how HAUNT 15, 16, and 17 were followed by HAUNT 4.

There were then two 15's, two 16's, two 17's, and so on. I can generally piece it together, though it takes me a while to figure it out.

Anyway,(boy can I get to rambling) Jack came here for romance, but we kept him. And he seemed to do very well with a kind of story that we used primarily in CRIME, SHOCK, and the science-fiction titles.

RICH: He seemed to be real big on this love triangle thing, really science-fiction love stories. So you used him on love in spite of the science-fiction format, ahah!

BILL: Well, yes, we gave him a lot of those. We wrote the stories, and when we sat down to do a story for Jack, we planned it for <u>him</u>. Every story was written with the artist <u>in</u> mind. When we wrote a story for Graham Ingles, we knew it was a story for Graham Ingles, so naturally we put in all the ooky monsters and slobbering blobs of protoplasm and messed-up old people we could come up with. And we gave Jack the love triangles and pretty young girls. Somewhere in almost every Kamen story some girl says, "Look, Buster!", like "Spa Fon" and "Squa Tront", which the aliens invariably said.

RICH: You enjoyed wording those little trademarks into the stories, didn't you?

BILL: Yeah, we enjoyed it. Al put most of those in, because Al was the actual writer.

We'd plot together, generally. I would come up with the 'Springboards', and then we'd sit down (the two of us) and we'd plot out the idea. Then Al would go off and write the story from about one o'clock to four o'clock. Al would actually write the story in pencil on the drawing board, breaking everything into panels as he went. Then, the story would be sent out for lettering. (As you know, we used 'Leroy' machine-lettering.) When the thing was lettered it was given to the artist, already broken down into panels, the balloons drawn in, and the lettering already in the balloons. And that's all the artist would get; he got no other script. Al would go over the story with him, and then the artist would take it from there, with no other directions.

RICH: Today at Marvel Comics, they do it differently, almost reverse. They do all the art, with balloons and spaces for narration, then the writers take it from there. That's probably why there's seldom a concise plot involved.

BILL: Well, this was something new that Martin Goodman tried to make the comics more art-oriented. After all, when we gave a story out, the story was already there; there was nothing the artist could do to change the yarn.

Joe Orlando was working for Marvel when the new idea was first started. He said, "They're doing something revolutionary over there. They're letting the artist do whatever he wants, and then they're putting the words in later." I don't see how they can do it, but apparently they're having a measure of success with the technique.

RICH: Well, on the new horror titles they're reverting to the traditional style of story first again.

Do you think EC could have gone in it's original form until today if it wasn't for the friction you got from various groups and the comics code? To clarify, do you think the artists could have kept up the great quality art and could Al and you have kept up the stories?

BILL: Towards the end, Al and I had brought in some script-writers. Larry Stark, in his famous "Ellegy to EC" said something to the effect, "You could almost see that towards the end, everyone stopped caring." I never felt quite that way. What we did was to bring in the writers, who I think actually strengthened the books. After all, after five years, Al and I were pretty exhausted and we started running nothing but house-plots. We had run just about everything new we could conceivably do. In desperation we brought in the outside writers, who were fresh, and by working with them (Al re-writing just about everything they came up with) I think the last few issues of the horror books were even stronger than the middle ones. I didn't keep those records, unfortunatley, and I don't know who wrote the final stories. I know we had a Carl Wessler, and he was a darn good writer. We had a Richard Bernstein, a Jack Oleck, and an Irv Wirstein. So, I don't see why we could not have continued.

But I gave those horror books up after the Senate hearings.

RICH: You actually had to go down to Washington to be part of them?

BILL: No, they were held right here in New York.

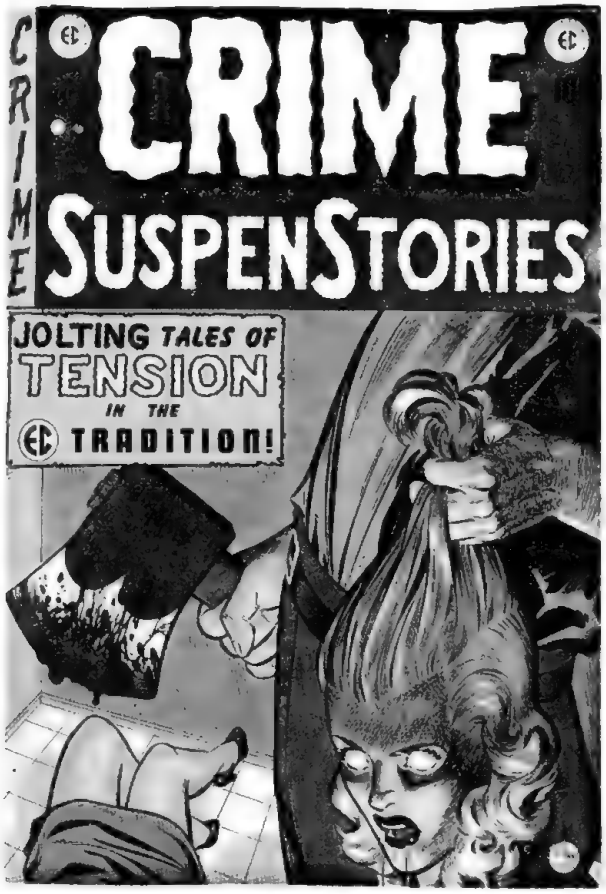
RICH: Jerry Weiat is supposed to present the actual transcripts in the third issue of his fanzine, "Squa Tront." Were you much harassed by the Senators? They seem really to harry people when they get them up before these fact-finding panels.

BILL: Well, we were slightly harasses. They had me a little punchy there towards the end.

I have a recording, and I know there were differences in what was actually said and the printed version. Nothing severe -- these were court recorder's mistakes. It was probably 99% accurate in the printed form.

RICH: Did they have you pretty depressed and disgusted after it was all over?

BILL: Oh, yeah. It was headline stuff around the country. Somehow, I managed to cop the headlines. They did ask me that one loaded question during the hearings: "Do you think this is in good taste?" And they held up that Craig cover (CRIME SUSPENSTORIES 22).




And I said, "I thought it was in good taste for a horror comic."

So they said, "Well, how would it not have been in good taste?"

(Now, the truth of the matter is that when Craig first brought that cover in, it had blood dripping from the neck. You could see the bottom of the severed neck and blood was dripping out. To Craig I said, "Johnny, move the cover up so the bottom of the page cuts this whole thing off and there isn't any." ((blood))

That's what I said, and of course, they thought it was hysterically funny. And it made the headlines. It was a difficult experience, because all of a sudden you find that everyone you know kind of regards you as a criminal. There had been the famous Kefauver Hearings before this, with criminals and the mafia, and they were very big. So all of a sudden, we comic publishers, and me in particular, find ourselves classed in with Frank Costello and all the other crooks dragged up before Kefauver. Kefauver technically was not the head of the comics comittee, but Kefauver was pretty rough on me.

RICH: How many days did they grill you?

BILL: Oh, I think it was just one session, or at the most, two. If it started in the morning it finished up in the evening, or maybe it was just one morning.

RICH: What was the crucial point at which you decided to throw in the towel on horror comic publishing?

BILL: Well, after this hearing. You can't imagine the condition of the country in those days. First of all, it was the McCarthy Era, and the whole country was nuts anyway. There were all kinds of stupid things going on. To show you how really wild things were -- do you remember the cover of one of the early MAD's which was disguised as a composition book? You know, "designed to sneak into class....." Well, the HARTFORD COURANT in those days was regarded as one of the top six or seven papers in the country. It had a reputation for integrity matched only by the NEW YORK TIMES.

And the HARTFORD COURANT had a big campaign attacking me and MAD magazine. They took that cover seriously, and they actually had headlines such as: "CORRUPTING YOUTHS BY SNEAKING COMICS INTO CLASS!" My God, MAD magazine, y'know?

RICH: No sense of humor at all?

BILL: No sense of humor at all, taking all that stuff seriously. In an early issue of PANIC (our own imitation of MAD, which never went anywhere) we did a parody of "The Night Before Christmas" (Bill Elder). And on the back of Santa's sled he put a sign: "Just Divorced." It was typical of what Bill Elder used to do in all of his MAD work. He used to put signs all over. You know, cars have signs "Just Married" so the sled had one "Just Divorced." Who gave it a thought until we found ourselves banned in Boston and all over Massachusetts. They were on our back because Santa Claus was a saint and we suggested that Santa Claus was just divorced. Well, who gave this thing a forethought?

We were catching hell on everything.

RICH: You must catch it nowadays, too.

BILL: Naw, nothing like the old days, nothing. It's a whole different world.

RICH: A whole different mood of the country?

BILL: Absolutely. Why, we go ten times as rough in MAD today as we ever used to dare, and we never catch anything; in the old days, my God, we never put out an issue when the roof didn't fall in completely.

RICH: What about Wertham? Did you ever have any personal relations with him? A lot of people associate him with the fall of EC, since he really got on the bandwagon and led a flock of folk into believing that comics were toxic to a young child's mind.

BILL: Aww, no, nothing personal. He made a good living at it at the time. And he's made a good living in recent years attacking television. You know, there's nothing left in comics to attack, and now he attacks television with the same old line. Oh, I read his book and I found it full of the worst kind of mistakes, blunders; he completely missed the point of a number of our stories. We found his book humorous. It was amazing how a man could be

so far off base on this sort of thing. The things he read into our motives, they were completely fallacious because his understanding of the stories was screwed-up. I just can't off the top of my head remember an example. But he made stupid mistakes.

RICH: I guess he was a master of lifting things out of context.

BILL: Yes.

RICH: Speaking of censorship, there's a controversy over whether MAD 5 was distributed in the normal fashion or whether you pulled it back at a certain point and tried to stop it from hitting the stands. Amongst collectors it's rumored to be a rare issue, dealer's charge more for it than they do for say, MAD 4 because it's supposed to be the rarest MAD. Could you clear up this undocumented situation?

BILL: Yes, you see, MAD 5 had a biography of me. In those days we were running biographies of everybody, but because MAD was MAD, we hammed up my whole biography. We said I had made my money through the sale of filth and dope and then I had come into comics, and all of that sort of thing. There was a publisher who was many of these things in the comic magazine industry. He had been, to the best of my knowledge, a semi-pornographer, which is where he had gotten his start. And while I was kidding around and writing that thing about myself, I was in a very loose way following the carreer of that man, who shall remain nameless. This fellow was very influential and very well-liked by the wholesalers. And for some reason when this hit, thw whole roof fell in. It was only later on that I found out that it was this fellow who was helping to lower the boom on me. But at the time, I didn't know what was happening.

Also, the first story of that issue was "Outer Sanctum". The host, as I recall, was beckoning you to come into the outer sanctum. And written on the doors were things like: "Big Fat Errand Boy Wanted." Now, what would a horror character want with a big, fat errand boy?

He'd want to eat him!

But these guys didn't know that; they could only assume that anyone who wanted a big, fat errand boy wanted him for sodomy, for homosexual perversion. So now Gaines is selling sodomy and homosexual perversions! And try to explain to a 55-year old Jewish wholesaler that big, fat errand boys are eaten by ghouls in horror stories. (I don't know, that might be worse than sodomy in the first place (chuckle.))

But the combination of this biography and their finding things offensive written into the little doodles almost put me out of business. God, I remember that Sunday morning, when the whole thing broke. I had to get Feldstein down from Merrick, and Kurtzman from Mt. Vernon to put our heads together. We had to devise a clever apology which we duplicated six times to create six little booklets which we distributed to the six big shots at the wholesaler's convention, which happened to be in New York at the time. And we appeased them -- they were gonna absolutely refuse to handle our books. It was just one of the thousand crises that we faced in those days, mostly over people being offended by the things we did in comics. And they weren't things you could anticipate. If you publish something pornographic, you know you're looking for trouble. But we never published anything pornographic. We were always getting into trouble, and we never knew why exactly. So it couldn't be prevented.

Those were the times!

RICH: In retrospect, when these crises came up, especially involving offending people, did you strive to compromise in the future to prevent recurrences of the same kind of friction? Did it help to sharpen your perception of what you were doing when these people got on the bandwagon and said their kids' minds were gonna be changed and the kids might start acting like some of the comic book characters? Or did you feel the critics were going to far?

BILL: We considered them all crackpots. We did just what we had to do to survive. The present Comics Code Association is not the first association. It is at least the second or the third. If you recall, there was a little bar with a star under it on the old EC's. This was the seal of the first code authority. I was involved with it, and for many years, we had to take everyting we did and put it through their censor. Of course, their censor was a lot more reasonable than Judge Murphy, who was our downfall.

RICH: Early EC was censored, then.

BILL: It was. And there were a lot of things we had to take out of the horror books. When Judge Murphy came along the horror books couldn't possibly survive.

RICH: But then actually the Senate was attacking the wrong people over what had gotten into print. After all, the stuff was censored, so it would seem to be the censor's responsibility regarding what had gone to press.

BILL: Well, let's face it -- the censor was paid by the publishers. The first censor didn't represent most of the industry; he only represented a small segment. Outfits like National Comics and Dell, Classics Illustrated and so on felt that their comics were clean in the first place, and what the hell did they need a censor to censor their comics for? They didn't even join the first organization.

So most of the early censor's clients, you might say, were the smaller publishers. I suppose that he thought that if he got too rough, he'd lose a client, and every time he lost a client his salary would go down. When Murphy's association was set up, it was set up more on the order of a Hollywood Hayes Office. Everyone in the industry went through it, and if you didn't, you got clobbered at the wholesale level.

I tried not to join it, and my first New Direction magazines in each title were put out without the new seal; we sold like 15%, which is catastrophic. So I joined the association and the sales went up to like 20 or 25%, which is still catastrophic.

So, you asked me about four hours ago (chuckle) what put me out of comics. And the answer is that I was loosing money left and right. And I went out of comics because I couldn't put out a title that wasn't losing money. Every single New Direction comic, every single one of them, lost money. You know, I had run out of money.

RICH: It was pretty incredible to me that when EC put out its best stuff (the second half of the horror runs, and the second half of the science-fiction) sales dipped lower then at the beginning. The second half of my article on the WEIRD SCIENCE run is going to be titled "The Power and the Glory" to indicate how they had blossomed into greatness. Was it the many crises of offense that held the sales up by the squeeze at the wholesale level, or was it that you were above the heads of the comic-buying audience when the high quality came on strong?

BILL: Two things were probably hurting us: One was the increase in titles. But then, the horror comics were doing pretty well right on through. It was the other titles that were doing comparatively badly, like the science-fiction. And we really had no other compe-

tition in that area. There were a few other science-fiction comics, but nothing like the EC science-fiction. The sci-fi never did very well; I think the best they did was 75% sales, which is phenomenal by today's standards. But back then 75% was just mediocre sales. The horror books sold 80-85% most of the time. I think the science-fiction books... by George! you may be right! Maybe we did get too good for the market. I never really thought about that; there's no question that as the quality went up, the sales slid down, but I never hooked the two together.

Well, it finally got to the point that we were losing a little money on them, and we didn't give a damn. The sci-fi never at any time made us rich..... when I say we sold 75% originally, that was only during the first year, and I think they quickly dove down to 60%.

RICH: What's the break-even point and what's the good-return point in sales percentages, the way you're analyzing things now?

BILL: Well, in those days, we put most new titles out at 300,000 copies. That was a good place to start a comic. It wasn't particularly economically feasible to put out much less. And it would break at, oh, maybe 55-60% somewhere around there. So that's the point: if in the science-fiction field there were 100,000 dyed-in-the-wool fans, and assuming every one of them bought our comic, which they didn't, we still had to come up with a lot of comic readers to sell 60% of 300,000. And they didn't sell it for very long,by my records.

I'm very archive conscious, but about 8 or 9 years ago, we had a series of robberies. Some nut kept breaking into the office, robbing things. And one time when there was nothing else for him to rob, he gathered up all my records and started a bonfire with them. Worst thing he could do to me -- it broke my heart. He also burned up about 500 horror and science-fiction springboards that I'd never gotten around to using.

RICH: What exactly is a "springboard?"

BILL: Well, that was the idea which Al and I would use when we wanted to do a story. A typical springboard would be, ohhhh..... (chuckle) ..... Here's an unpublished story; someone once asked me, "How in the hell do you make up a horror story?" So I sat there in thought and I made up the following horror story; what I'll tell you will be the springboard:

Now, you've got these two guys. The first one is a promoter, a wise-guy, and the other fellow is a sort of simple soul. The first guy comes up with this incredible idea that he's going to announce to the press. Whatever figure DuPont stock closes at that day on the New York Stock Exchange, by the next day, 24 hours later, his associate is going to weigh exactly that number of pounds. And so now you go through it..... DuPont goes up ten points, and you see the guy stuffing food into his poor friend; DuPont goes down ten points, and he's got the poor slob doing exercises, steam baths, all that kind of stuff. And then one day somebody opens the door and says: My God!" Because, there's this guy split right down the middle. Of course, DuPont had had a two-for-one stock split..... Springboard!

RICH: You love that sick twist in there, don't you. That sick humor touch.

BILL: Yes, always. Got to have it. That's the old EC type ending.

RICH: In the article in SPA FON 4 covering the first half of the WEIRD SCIENCE run, I put in that I thought one of your favorite gimmicks -- well, I wouldn't exactly label it gimmick, because I thought it was good -- one of your favorite pitches was to build sympathy for some poor slob of a character during the early development of a story, who later on really gets massacred by the forces of evil at work in the story. And you did that very well, for instance, in the yarn "Seeds of Jupiter" (WS 8), where this main character, "Peachpit" was his name, played the stooge.

BILL: Peachpit! (Laugh)

RICH: At the end, a gruesome, grizzly monster comes crawling out of Peachpit's gut, grown there from a seed from space the pod-eater had eaten as was his habit. Peachpit's lying there dehydrated, a shell of his former self. And reading it, I got worked up seeing this happen to the poor guy I had gotten to feel heart-warmed towards.

We don't have anything to compare to that nowadays in comics. No real psychological sensitivity to the modern mass-produced stories. No empathetic arousal by the way the innocent guys get dumped on. We do have the troubled, tormented super-hero who wonders about his super-life in thought balloons, but this goes on endlessly and is trite before long.

I don't find any good, self-contained stories, running six or seven pages, with the well-detailed characterization, differences in dialog between people to keep their differences in personality sharp. And then, too, there are very few yarns where the good, true-heart gets clobbered in short order.

BILL: Let's take the typical springboard and describe writing a story even further. I'd get this idea and I'd write it down on a piece of paper. I had this gigantic batch of plots -- thousands of pieces of paper, each with a springboard on it. The big thing in my life in those days was to sell Al Feldstein a story. And once I got him interested, then he'd start working, and we's go into the details more fully. And finally when we got the plot all worked out, he's go out and write it. Of course, he's a great writer, a natural writer. But, being also an artist was his secret. He and Harvey Kurtzman and Johnny Craig, being artists, could write visually, where the average comic scriptwriter in those days was not an artist. He was just a scriptwriter. Well, it's one thing to write for a novel and another thing to write for comics -- you've got to think visually for comics, and these guys did. So that was one of the lucky things I did. I got three guys who were artists to write my stuff.

RICH: You considered Al a pretty good artist, didn't you?

BILL: Well, I don't think he was as good an artist as he was a writer.

RICH: Wait a minute on that. In your biography of Al Feldstein that ran on the inside frontcover of the EC titles one month, you wrote that he did the best science-fiction covers in the field.

BILL: That's right, science-fiction covers. There's no doubt about it. That's what I've got by him to represent his work on my wall here, my personal collection. His horror stories and covers were imaginative, but Al himself admits he's not the greatest artist. On the other hand, he's a great story-teller.

RICH: Did you have any strong sentiments about what was more important, the storyline or the art? Or did you think they were equally important, one not covering up for a lack in the other?

BILL: As a matter of fact, to give you an example of how I feel about that I can bring you up to date. In comics, when I first started out, the going rate for script was about six bucks per page, and the going rate for art was about twenty bucks, twenty-three to be exact. Oh, National paid better than that, I suppose, but the goings rates were those among the smaller publishers like myself. Over the years the rates went up, but I always tried to get the script rates up much more quickly than the art rates. The ratio started about four-to-one, art over script. Today in MAD, my top rates are over two hundred a page for art and over two hundred apage for script. So you can see that I feel the script is at least 100% as important as the art. Maybe even a little more important, but I realize that it takes an artist a little longer to do a page than it takes a script-writer. Our top script-writer makes just as much as our top artist.

RICH: Are you as happy with your people today as you were in the days of EC? I know that's a loaded question.....

BILL: Do you mean talent-wise?

RICH: Yes.

BILL: Probably some of them are even more talented.

RICH: Bob Clarke and Al Jaffee seem to do very well.

BILL: Jaffee is a powerhouse. His principle talent is his script. He's a good artist, but not as good as writing script. This guy is a very, very funny man.

RICH: He's got that sick stamp to his humor that comes on so like MAD. That Gahan Wilson (PLAYBOY)genius is in Jaffee. That's the kind of humor that cracks me up, personally. Ohh, what's an example?..... where the one guy says to his friend, "Damn! I got a flat tire this morning when I ran over that milk bottle." And the other guy naturally replies, "Well, why didn't you drive around the bottle? Are you blind?" And the first guy answers, "The damn kid had it under his coat!"

BILL: I love sick humor, and of course, the old EC horror stories were largely sick humor. And that's what people missed -- that almost every one of those horror stories was tongue-in-cheek. I happen to be one of the chickenest people you'll ever see. If I see blood, I faint. When I tell that to people, they think I'm putting them on because of the old EC horror stuff. Well, that stuff was strictly fantasy, and in the field of fantasy I'll go as sick as you want. I'll match anybody, but not for real. Or I'll faint. Our horror stories were sick, and our science-fiction stories were largely sick. We had a lot of different kinds of science-fiction stories, but I enjoyed the ones with the sick twist best.

There was one about this gal who fell in love with this alien, and he knocked her up, and then at the end, this spell that he had cast over her so that she didn't know what he really looked like wore off. He turned out to be a typical Wood octopus-monstrosity, and she realized that she had been knocked up by one of those tentacles. (Laugh)

RICH: The mental transformation theme, ones mind playing tricks, seemed to be another favorite point of departure.

BILL: But again, some three hours ago, I was discussing sales, and that nut that came in here and burned all my records. For that reason, I can't dig the figures out to prove it, but I don't think that the sci-fi made money for more than a year or so before going into the red. We just kept them on because we liked them. And finally they did so badly that we combined the two into one (WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY) and we turned it into a quarterly. We even tried it at 15¢, but that didn't work.

RICH: Is it true that the distribution takes a heckuva lot of a cut out of the sales money -- that the money just barely trickles back to the publisher and the people who made the thing?

BILL: Well, in those days, we did get a nickel. This was low, and we were about the lowest in the industry. Most of the comics publishers got 5¼¢, and we, being with the smallest, weakest distributor, got 5¢. Now that quarter of a cent doesn't sound like much, but when you put out sixty issues a year, averaging three-hundred and-fifty thousand copies each, selling perhaps 65% of that, then multiply that by a quarter of a cent, that makes a vast difference, and it makes the difference between profit and loss. ($34,125.00 a year) That's why, in addition to everything else, we had to try a little harder because we were getting a little bit less. Those quarter of a cent's hurt.

RICH: Why were you getting less?

BILL: Well, because we were with the weakest distributor. And with the 700 comic titles, wholesalers couldn't care less. They couldn't care if you dropped dead. They'd much prefer to handle 25¢ magazines, and since they weren't aware of the EC insignia particularly at that time,they just took what came in, put them out for a few weeks, and then sent the rest back. I don't think that they ever realized that the EC's were selling better or worse than others -- they just took what came in and hated them all.

RICH: You had one campaign there where the fans in each town would go ever to the dealers and put the EC's out on top of the stacks. Did that help at all?

BILL: Well, after we put out four or five of the New Direction magazines, and they were still losing money, I thought it couldn't go on. So I'd try anything. But I don't think the fan campaign helped, not really. To this day I'll pass a newsstand and I'll see a stack of MAD's lying there. I just go over and pull it out front by habit.

Finally I dropped all the New Direction comics (VALOR, PIRACY, IMPACT, MD, EXTRA, INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION, PSYCHOANALYSIS). And since MAD was such a success at a quarter, I thought maybe I could pull it off with the other titles, so we put out the Picto-Fictions. They don't look it, but they were an extremely expensive magazine to produce, even without color. The comics are so deucedly cheap to produce -- they're put on newsprint in four colors. In those days, you could still get a comic printed for under two cents, which is fantastic. They were printed i n volume, of course, and I guess that's why. You had to print a quarter of a million to get the price. So when we went into Picto-Fiction's, my God, the price tripled and quadrupled for printing it. We tried them as I recall at 48 pages, and we spotted a little color here and there. And they were an abysmal failure. Nobody bought them, and again, I don't know if they got out. You're at the mercy of the wholesalers.

RICH: The EC emblem could really hold things back at the wholesale level, eh? Was this a chronic misgiving between you and the wholesalers?

BILL: Yeah, towards the end, the whole-salers didn't like us. And it culminated in a most terrible thing, where this little distributor we were with went bankrupt. At the time we had

the PICTO-FICTION's and MAD with this little outfit.

You have to understand the financial arrangements between a publisher and a distributor. The publisher sells his entire output to the distributor -- the distributor is his only customer. Now, he doesn't pay you for the issue at hand; ohh, he gives you a little bit, but for the most part he doesn't pay you. They're his and they're gone. He owes you the money. So this guy had been our distributor throughout the whole thing, and he owed us about $100,000, which in those days was a lot of money for me, in 1956. In March or April of that year he went bankrupt, owing me a grand total of $130,000. In turn, I owed the printer that much. So I was in a hell of a spot; I was counting on every cent the distributor owed me to pay the printer with.

Well, this was bad enough, but I worked that out. Then, you see, the distributor sells MAD magazine to the wholesalers and they fork over to him for them. Now, they have returns of MAD that don't sell, and they give them back to the distributor, who pays back for them. Then he subtracts it from what he owes me. But now the distributor is bankrupt, so there's nobody for the wholesalers to give the returns to. So they all come and tell me they want me to pay for them. But, my God, how can I pay for them -- I never got paid for that bunch of magazines that they've got in the first place.

Well, they said, "If you don't pay us, we're throwing you out." This was another of the wild things where for many years everything I touched turned to shit, and the shit turned out to be gold. Later it turned out that the best thing that could've happened to me was the weak distributor going bankrupt. 1) I got away from him; he was a terrible distributor. And 2) I went to the American News Company, which in those days was in magazine distribution. And it was a whole different set-up. In those days you either went through an independent distributor, of which there are a dozen, who go through wholesalers, or you went through the gigantic, monopolistic American News Company, which owned its own outlets.

So I went to American News (I left the whole independent outfit) and I said to them, "If you don't take me, I'm out of business. Here's what I need to stay in business." And what I showed them was MAD. And they took me on, whereupon for one year and one issue I stayed with them, and that's when MAD really started to take off; it went off the charts and started to sell a half a million copies. Now, this is a very respectable sale. Then American News announced to my horror that they were giving up magazine distribution, and I thought I'd have to go back to those ogres. But by this time MAD was strong enough and there was no problem. I went to Independent News, and everything's been fine since. To this day I have nothing to do with wholesaler's; I don't go to their conventions, and I want nothing to do with those guys.

RICH: What about future re-printing of EC stuff? I saw some things over there on your ledge from Woody Gelman. Is he onto reprinting EC as he did with FLASH GORDON?

BILL: Oh, yeah. Haven't you heard? Yes, Woody and I entered into a contract. He's putting out a ten dollar, mostly color book.

RICH: Mostly color?

BILL: The contract calls for 80% color. I've got the original art and I've got the silverprints. Bhob Stewart, who works for Woody over at Topps Chewing Gum first interested him in it. Bhob and I went through and picked the Table of Contents. And then we went down to the vault, where I keep all of this stuff. I have virtually every penstroke of art that was done for EC. As I say, I'm very archivo conscious. Many publishers threw the stuff out, but not me. I saved every scrap of it.

So we went down and pulled all the stuff and they're over there now photographing it. Of course, this is an avocation with Woody. He was going to try to get the thing out for Christmastime, but I don't think he's going to make it. And this one's going to be printed in Italy, tentatively 196 pages all told. (That's how we get the color in, by going to Italy for the printing.)

RICH: Reprinting what you consider to be the best of EC?

BILL: This is a combination, for the most part, of what Bhob Stewart and I chose. Eliminating what was put out in the Ballantine books. The Ballantine books represented more or less my idea of the best stuff, balanced off, because I wanted to have a representation of all the artists. (If my four favorite stories were Wood's, for example, I didn't use them all.)

Bhob is being a little more art conscious about it, so he's heavy on Ingles. He even wants to use an Ingles cover for the book.

RICH: How about the rarest EC: SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES 3? There are a few stories drifting about on what happened and how many got out.

BILL: Well, as you recall, I told you about the wholesalers and about how they wanted me to absorb the returns. And I told them that I couldn't possibly refund because I hadn't gotten paid for the issue in the first place. So they said, "Goodbye, Charly!" and that was that. At that time, SHOCK 3 was already off the presses. 250,000 copies of the insides and the covers had been printed, and all were sitting at the Charlton Bindery in New York, ready to be bound. (Incidentally, that's the bindery that still binds MAD.) But we didn't have the money to bind them. We didn't have the money to pay for printing them, even. We were really broke.

RICH: You were in a real bind, huh?

BILL: (chuckle, grimace, points to door out.) So I told the printers, "You know, I don't have the money to pay you. I can't pay you for the past stuff you did; I can't pay you for SHOCK 3. It's crazy to bind the thing because nobody's going to take it, anyhow. The wholesalers just won't have it."

So, horrible as it sounds, it was agreed to destroy 250,000 copies of SHOCK 3. But I said, "Look, hand bind me X copies of SHOCK 3 and send them over to my office for my files." Which they did.

Now the only question is, what was that X number of copies that were hand-bound. My recollection is that I said 100. Subsequently I heard that I had said 200, and I've heard 300. I don't remember what I said, but I doubt that I would have asked for more than 100, because I don't know what I would've done with them. I know I wanted to give a few copies to all the artists and writers that were in the book, and I know that I wanted to wrap twelve copies because I wrap twelve copies of everything. And I know that I wanted to put a copy in my bound volumes and in Al's bound volumes. So I know how 15 copies were used -- twelve wrapped and three put into bound volumes. My recollection is that there were 85 left, and anyone who wanted them just took them. They probably sat around the office for a few months, and then were gone, got used or thrown out or something. Because at the time, who cared?

RICH: Do you know that the thing sells for $50-$75 now, to the EC completist?

BILL: The last I heard, it was around $50. That's understandable. I'm a collector myself in my own way. Certain wines and coins -- you get hooked on something you collect and you'll pay most anything to complete.

RICH: Well, the EC's certainly were the best in the comics field. Even the men in it today, like Jim Steranko, a top-notch Marvel scripter and artist, agree that Al Feldstein was one of the very best comic writers. And when you've got both the best artists of the day and Al Feldstein writing for you, you put out some damn good comics.

He hasn't written any comic stories since EC has he?

BILL: No, strictly MAD.

RICH: Does that keep him busy?

BILL: Oh, it keeps him busy enough. You know, none of us around here work very hard. (Belly laugh) Al's not married to his job like Harold Ross of the NEW YORKER was. Or any of those guys who run around putting in 75 hour weeks. Al and I work a 35 hour week; we do a better job this way.

RICH: Much more relaxed than the EC frenzy. But you liked those days well enough at the time, didn't you?

BILL: Oh, I loved them -- a lot of fun. I used to read all night getting ideas for those stories.

RICH: Getting back to art, there's a rumor that Frazetta was going to do all the WEIRD FANTASY covers after a certain point, but it fell through. Is there any truth to it?

BILL: No, I dont remember that. You know the story about the Frazetta WSF cover we did use.....

RICH: You mean the BUCK ROGERS cover you used for WSF 29. Yes, I saw it in the original with the Buck Rogers helmet back on the guy, and it was a gas.

BILL: That's the only piece of art that I used in my life that I didn't buy outright. As I recall, I was paying sixty bucks for a cover in those days. And I think I offered him forty bucks for the rights of sixty bucks for the cover outright. And Frank, well, he was never one for the buck. He'd rather have the art. He kept it, and I think I paid forty or fifty. Today it's probably worth $200. Beautiful work, and the other thing he's got is the Picto-Fiction story we never printed.

When I went bankrupt, all the boys were working on a Picto-Fiction story. And I lasted until the day after Christmas. I just couldn't tell them I'd folded right before Christmas. Then I called everyone up and told them I'd had it; I couldn't go any further. "Finish up the last story you're working on and I'll pay you for it; that'll be your last job." But Frazetta said, "I won't finish it -- you don't have to pay me for it."

Boy, anything that saved me $200 in those days was great! So he kept it and he's still got it. He was in here a few months ago, and that's the last I've seen him.

RICH: Is he going to do anything more for MAD?

BILL: I don't know; he's so damn busy, you know. But I'd love him to do some work for MAD.

RICH: How about Wood?

BILL: Well, you know, Wood and MAD parted under strange circumstances. Woody had gotten sick,, and he had gotten very cantankerous. He had a headache for a long time, and that can make you cantankerous. His work had degenerated, and he took the criticism very badly. It got ooky there for a while, and so he left. But he got rid of the headache then, and now his work is very charming -- brilliant!

One of the last times I saw him, he said: "How's this for openers: that work I did for MAD stunk!" (Laugh)

But he never indicated that he wanted to come back. And, frankly, I don't think he wants the pressure.

RICH: He put the love into that old MAD comic humor stuff, showing a natural charm in it, and he had tremendous range, being able to do science-fiction, horror, and humor.

BILL: Funny thing -- Woody never used to smile; he was never happy about anything he did. I think he was just a sober man. He's a lot happier now, I feel. And certainly the stuff he does in WITZEND is so charming, so delightful. And that's probably what he means when he says his old EC work depresses him, compared to what he's doing now.

RICH: How about some of the other EC artists that are still around? You could never work Crandell into MAD, could you?

BILL: Crandall..... we gave Crandall one thing to do, a long, long time ago. But Crandall is not funny. He can do most anything, but I don't think he'd be effective in MAD. Ingles of course, has disappeared. Krigstein went on to fine art; I know every once in a while I get a notice in the mail that he's having a showing of his paintings. Apparently he's doing quite well.

Kamen is big in advertising art, for the Madison Avenue places. He drops in every six months or so and says Hi.

Jack Davis, you know what he's doing -- movie ads, TV ads, and everything under the sun. Bill Elder is drawing LITTLE ANNY FANNY; Kurtzman is on that with him.

Johnny Craig is working for an advertising agency, and I hear tell he's doing work for comics now again.

RICH: Yeah, he's doing horror stuff for Marvel now. For the new books they've on the fires for this Summer.

BILL: John was very slow. He did a lead story for two of the horror mags, and once in a while a story for one of the other books. He rearely got in all three horror books in two months.

He was sort of special. I can see that if you were an Ingles fan, you weren't a Craig fan. He was taken with Will Eisner -- you know, every artist has his god. I was very fond of Johnny's stuff; thought it was great.

We never put him in the science-fiction or in the grizzly horror. It was usually the more straight horror. The real Yecch stuff we gave to Ghastly (Ingles).

Davis could do anything.

RICH: Contrasted to Craig, I understand Davis was one of the fastest.

BILL: Oh, yeah. Jeez, yes! We used to do cartoons of him with his art machine..... just turn the crank and the art falls out at the other end. Very, very fast. He's working for MAD again now, and he doesn't do nearly enough. He can do about twenty pages a year, and that's all we can get from him.

Orlando is over at National. And you know about Williamson, Frazetta, and friends.

RICH: How about George Evans?

BILL: Gee, I don't know. We sort of drift a-

part when we don't have a business connection. But he did a lot of great stuff. This book that Woody Gelman's doing -- again, we tried to balance it, and we've got a couple of damn nice Evans stories in there.

RICH: You're never going into comics again, are you?

BILL: Oh, no. One of the contibuting reasons I gave up the horror comics is that I wouldn't do them if I couldn't do them my way. I think a lot of the success of the horror comics is that they were horror comics more than it was that we did them.

This is something hard to accept. Hugh Hefner put out a magazine called TRUMP which went to oblivion after two issues. And then he put out a magazine called SHOW BUSINESS ILLUSTRATED which only lasted a year or so. He put a lot of money into them, and they were flops. I'm sure he was very surprised in both cases, because he has been so very successful with PLAYBOY. One gets to think he can do anything. But when you come to think of it, everything Hefner's been successful with is sex, and he's the number one sex success in the history of the world. That's his medium.

And it's the same with me. I was very lucky with horror, and I was very, very lucky with MAD, so why should I knock my brains out? This book for Nostalgia Press is just for fun; I get next to no royalty on it; it's just to do it.

Also, at the same time, we're doing a $10 MAD hardcover for this Summer. I have high hopes for it; it's going to be something different. 256 pages, 64 pages of color plates including the original "Superduperman", "Bat Boy and Rubin", and "Woman Wonder" in color! In addition to which, we're running six of the Annual gimmicks.

RICH: I understand you ran a poll to determine the average age of your readers, and you were surprised to find out it was as low as it was.

BILL: Well, that was for MAD, not EC.

And we were disappointed at the time, since we thought we were hitting an older crowd, and we always aimed higher than we thought our readers were. But I think our readers are smarter than we expected, so it's a lucky thing. We found the mean readership in that poll to be around 14, but you have to understand that first of all, that poll was around ten years ago. It could be outdated now. And secondly, that's the mean readership, and it goes from there in both directions. Everybody knows that we have readers in the colleges and we have 'em ten years old. What the ten-year-old gets out of MAD, I don't know.

RICH: One important question I wanted to put to you..... Do you think it's possible to change the mind of a kid with the offbeat stuff he reads in a comic book or MAD magazine? To clarify, do you think it's possible to assassinate the character of a tyke with the gruesome horror or tremendously sick humor; or do you think it's healthy to expose him to the wild, the extreme in life as well as the tame?

BILL: I have always believed it's healthy. However, I'm no doctor, and I'm no psychiatrist, and I'm no psychologist; and many psychologists who are quite respectable, un-Wertham type psychologists take the opposite point-of-view. There must be a breaking point somewhere.

Some say, if you read about violence, you won't commit it, and I take that point-of-view. However, I'm prejudiced. You could make a case that MAD is corrupting; it depends how far you want to go. But I believe that a kid is active or passive, and the kid that sits home and reads is passive. The kid that is apt to do anything is not apt to sit home and read.

RICH: Well, Mr. Gaines, SPA FONers all over thank you for sharing your thoughts with us. Now, just one other thing..... how'd you like to turn over those twelve new copies of every EC you're saving to me, so that I could set up breadlines and dish them out?

BILL: (Laugh and frown simultaneously-- runs out of room to catch his 5:30 car ride home.)

It's a MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD world, thank God.

**THE above** interview was conducted on the afternoon of Wednesday, April 2, 1969. I think a measure of periscopic color concerning the surroundings at that time might be interesting to the Spa Foners of America.

Mr. Gaines was dressed in a blue two-pocket shirt and dark slacks, sitting behind a neat and spotless desk, with a "No Smoking" sign placed squarely in the middle of it. During the interview he wheeled around in a coaster chair, taking phone calls, reviewing current MAD projects, and talking to me simultaneously, a mad-cap pace that he enjoyed.

A ready laugh, a smooth informal manner, and an engaging ever-present grin are the things about him that stand out in my mind. On the walls surrounding us were paintings by Al Feldstein --of a science-fiction scene (the cover of SQUA TRONT 3), by Johnny Craig -- of his famous "Crypt-Keeper," and by Graham Ingles -- a spooky, ooky graveyard tableau, with the stoop-shouldered "Old Witch" standing drooping in an unkempt graveyard. It was most striking, done in drab colors with big, loose brush-strokes. Having its best effect viewed from across the room, it was terrific to the taste of an EC addict. The lighting, soft and cold moonlight, was incredible, and the markers and gravestones, tilting in all directions, created a chaotic effect of horror and eerie evil I have not often felt.

Outside Bill Gaines' office, the corridor linking to the other MAD offices is lined with MAD original covers by Mingo and Freas.

In the waiting room outside the complex stands a full-scale cut-out of Alfred E. Neuman in a Bavarian leder-hosen outfit, grinning insanely at all those who wait to go within the mad MAD world he is doorman of.

Also typical of the atmosphere within the set of rooms MAD magazine is created in is the faucet, which hangs suspended by three strings in Mr. Gaines' office. And there it wavers about two feet below the ceiling of the room, a constant stream of water pouring out of it, as if magically supplied.

To me that faucet, drawing water seemingly from the thin air typifies the steady stream of creative magic Bill Gaines has been pouring forth for the last 20 years, with the help of the geniuses he has drawn to him -- a constellation of marvelous minds who help him to make our world a little bit livlier, a lot more enjoyable.

Long live Bill Gaines and the EC tradition!

**finis**

Wrightson

# POEMS 'N OLD UNDERWEAR.....

## "GOD, IT'S RAINING"

Hearing Chok-Chok's roar, Smith began to sing his song, "Rain, rain go away come again another day."
Chok-Chok seemed to be deaf that morning. He continued to bluster and foam and drip, drip, drip.
Smith went on with his tune, "It's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring."
Crackle-bam-pwop!
Spider strands of summer lightning crackled across the misty sky.
No, Chok-Chok wasn't deaf.

John Guzlowski

## POETIC JUSTICE

I was sitting across from an atheist,
at church yestereve.
He put six slugs and a button
into the collection plate.
I put three slugs
into the minister
and tried to escape.
But it was fatal, futile, and fated.
My bloodlust was sated.
(I hadn't time to contemplate,
so the murder wasn't premeditated.)

Jay Broecker

## SECOND COMING

And Jesus spoke unto the sailor's widow
and said, "Come into my mind
and I will give you the sun of tomorrow's
paradise horizons
to brighten the light of today's
sorrow deserts."

And the woman looked upon His face
and felt the wonder of His words
but answered, "I have no mind that you may sense.
I have no sorrow that you may touch.
I have nothing that can be fathered
and made to grow in the garden
of Thy love."

And then the world was silent
as the Christ's eyes became twin novas,
giving still more light to the noonday.
He looked upon the woman
and quicksilver surged through her veins
and her body was twisted with spasms
and her mind burned and erupted
and became a worm's nest of life and oozing,
serpent flesh
and she died in a moaning wail of hunger.

And then Jesus the Christ gazed upon the dung mound,
once a woman,
and through sad tears murmured
"Much had you to give."

John Guzlowski

## IDENTITY REGAINED FOREVER

Donnerwetter, donder, blitzen!
came the stormtrooper's loud curse.
Relentless actions, pounding humans
into dust where once was flesh.

The supple skin of countless thousands
brutalized till soft was cold,
And thrown into the yawning chasms
of a nation full of graves.

The SS troops were prize possessions
of the lunacy within
The bowels of nation where once people
laughed with mirth not creased with tears

The inhumane mass group behavior
seemed so unidentitied,
But was made up of sole people
clustered into murderers.

A single one with besmirched garb on
Paused at once to see a corpse
Looking, stunning in his face.
Dead in err -- his mother was it,
Lying in a wet clay rut
Where the herds of humans died.

He cradled then the slack and filthed head
Crying tears of bloody pain.
And he too, one of prized position,
Fell dead there soon without his coat.

Rich Hauser

## THE HANGMAN

Whenever there's a time to pitch dung, a bell to be rung, a man to be hung,
He's there.
Whenever there's a wrong over right, a sandwich to bite, a noose to be tight,
He's there.
He's the jolly, holly hangman, and he's ready to do you in.

He comes around at evening time, when all the city sleeps.
He does his work efficiently; he plays his game for keeps.
He wears a big, black poncho, and a pair of fourteen "D"'s,
And if you hear him coming round, your blood is sure to freeze.
He's the jolly, holly hangman, and he's ready to do you in.

Whenever there's a word to be spoke, an oxteam to yoke, a neck to be broke,
He's there.
Whenever there's a death in the town, a house to tear down, a woman to frown,
He's there.
He's the jolly, holly hangman, and he's ready to do you in.

He plies his trade most earnestly; he really knows his stuff.
He makes it look so easy; you know it is no bluff.
The body jerks there skyward, snaps along the rope.
The bloated tongue shoots outward, the fingers start to grope.
But eyes no longer seeing, and mouth no longer live,
Continue to bulge outward in struggling to survive.

The hangman now is smiling; he senses what's to come.
The end of another life, my friend; are you sure you don't want some?

Jay Broecker

# .....OF RHYME & REASON

MINI NOVEL II.....by John Guzlowski

Manned by the multi-limbed, single-breasted she-loons of the devil-king Hogruth, the Wall was considered invulnerable.

Fifty cubits of hand-hewn stone could be counted from the Wall's base to its ramparts, and fifty more in its thickness.

For two centuries, scores of millions of haggard, crippled slaves gave their sorrows and their lives to it.

Finished, it defied a dozen Egarthigian well-breds and their vile, desert hardened hordes.

Asgar stood upon the down-like grass, surveying the black majesty of the horizon-spanning Wall. He frowned, lifted a cigar to his lips, and drew a cloud of blue haze. He savored its goodness, allowing it to drift into his lungs.

Moments passed.

He turned to his lieutenant and asked, "That height of ebony, can it be scaled?"

"Nay, Sirrah," Smithgun replied.

"Can we not pierce the Wall with our engines of war?"

"Nay, Sirrah," the worried aide murmured.

Again, Asgar frowned. He glanced at his cigar and allowed it to fall. Suddenly, his eyes fixed on a section of the Wall which he had previously missed.

Asgar then spoke the words which would henceforth cause his name to be cherished and toasted wherever fighting men would gather to recall distant moments of valor, war, and bravery:
"Gee, they forgot to close the gate."

MY PRISON

Once in the heart of an August night,
When no bird heard another's flight,
And all the leaves of all the green trees
Solemnly hung limp and still,
I, singly out in nature's preserve,
Thought I saw raw fantasies
Dancing out amongst the trees.
Where a hillocks mossy rill
Gave the moonlight bright green nerve,
I thought I saw a zephyr swerve
In and out amongst the bushes,
Bending branches with wind-pushes.

The zephyr had a form, I fancied,
The moonlight seemed to follow it.
But what I saw is hardly "portant
(Dancing out across the glade)
'Cause the cause of strange new visions
Hardly carries much a portent
When I am a lunatic
Trying to escape my prison.
But my prison lives within.

Rich Hauser

THE OLD BONE MAN

The man who collects old bones came here last week.
He grimaced with his toothless maw and stared with
Vacuous eyes, longingly, at a piece of steak I had,
Impaled upon my fork.
Something once wild and free and living, roasted on
My fork.
I pondered chewing it, to make my fat belly even more.
The old bone man was just thanking me for some scraps
The dog had left.
When I thrust him down into my dinner plate,
Almost scaring him to death.

Jay Broecker

SEA WITCH

Beneath a starless sky
Enveloped in an ebon mist
Of darkest night,
Upon a craggy reef
The sea witch stands.

Without a moon
Yet bathed
In eerie light
She stands.
Naked
Her ivory form
Glistening
In the icy spray
Her raven hair
Billows in the gale.

A soft, pale glow
Illuminating her bosom
Hiding a spirt
Dark and mysterious.

Her outstretched arms
Conduct her symphony
Of murky waters
Seething
Tempests rise
Oceans rage
At her command.

Her beckon
Brings the Kraken
From the deeps.

Her eyes
Reflect the sea
The soul
In pools
Of darkest emerald
Depths.

About her
Crash the tides
Rocks are beaten, crushed
By boiling surf
While her feet
Pale, delicate
Are gently washed.
Her slender ankles
Lightly caressed
In swirling currents.

What awful power lies within
Her grasp.
A soul Tormented
Imprisoned in the sea
And yet
She smiles
Delight
Upon her Face
A mystery
Enchantress of the sea.

**Inspired by Frazetta's Painting**
**Won an Alabama State Award**
**By James E Thompson**

THE WORLD'S MOST ALL-ENCOMPASSING EPIC POEM

Life,
Love,
Death.

Idea by Jay Broecker
Written by R. Hauser
Edited by J. Guzlowski

R. CRANDALL

Steve Hickman '69

Wrightson

Wright 2011